

# ERRATA.

**P**AGE 3. line 6. for *and* read *and*; p. 6. l. 22. a comma only;  
 p. 11. l. 22. r. *effectual*; p. 17. l. 28. for *dispose* r. *depose*;  
 p. 18. l. 26. for *the* r. *their*; p. 19. l. 28. make a comma at *Se-*  
*vice*, l. 29. dele Semicolon; p. 33. l. 1. for *motions* r. *motives*;  
 p. 42. l. 15. for *they* r. *thus*; p. 44. l. 25. for *it is* r. *is it*; p. 55.  
 l. 26. dele *his*; p. 86. l. 26. for *and* r. *but*; p. 89. l. 14. dele  
 Colon; p. 107. l. 12. after *God* add *says he*; p. 145.  
 l. 19. for *it* r. *this*; p. 160. l. 28. for *awfully* r. *lawfully*; p. 184.  
 l. 20. for *now* r. *more*; p. 188. l. 6. add *where* to the beginning  
 of the line; p. 189. l. 14. r. *Martyr*; p. 190. l. 26. r. *con-*  
*tradistinction*; p. 194. l. 15. for *principal* r. *principle*; p. 196.  
 l. 2. after *Kingdom* add *or*; p. 103. l. 23. for *viz.* *that* r. *and*  
 p. 196. l. 26. add *to* in the beginning of the line; p. 27. l. 12.  
 for *we* r. *be*; in the running Title of Chap. 8. for *of* r. *upon*;  
 p. 141. l. 5. add, *For if Arguments drawn from Natural Reason*  
*have no force of themselves to prove a God, antecedent to Divine*  
*Revelation, I do not see how they can have any afterwards;* and if  
*they be such as any ways depend upon Divine Revelation, so far will*  
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A  
DISCOURSE  
OF  
RELIGION;

SHAVING  
*Its Truth and Reality;*  
OR,  
*The Senselessness of Religion to*  
*Human Nature.*

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## Introduction.

**R**ELIGION is so favourable to all our Interests, that it is justly matter of amazement to all good Men, that ever any Man should attempt the discrediting it: For at the same time, that any kind of injury is offer'd to it, the Happiness of Mankind is struck at; and no Man can bring it into any disgrace, but to his own infinite detriment and mischief.

And yet so far is Humane Nature corrupted with base Lusts, that for the sake and quiet enjoyment of them, Men care not what Violence they offer to that, which in Interest they are chiefly bound to support, and without which it is impossible they should enjoy any of that peace and security, which are the necessary comforts of this life. It is possible indeed that many of those that do wickedly, may have no profess'd ill design against Religion, nor have gone so far as to disown it or ridicule the profession of it; but yet all kind of Wickedness does bring an ill report upon it; and a wicked life is such a denial of its Truth and Reality, as leaves no room to believe that they can be heartily persuaded of their Obligation to practise it, who live in a contradiction to its Principles. To live as if there was no God, is certainly as bad, as to declare we believe there is none; And he is as great an Enemy to Religion who

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lives as if it was a cheat, as he who is so ingenuous to own he believes it to be so.

Nay of the two, it is much the worse to pay so little respect to a Being, whom we believe to deserve our highest reverence; and spitefully to break through the Rules of Religion, which we profess we have no reason to despise, than to slight and vilifie them, because we look upon them to be no better than the jugglings of an Impostour. For let us but bring the matter a little home to our selves, and try how we brook the Enmity of a Man, who, while he fairly tells us he has no just exception against us, yet at every turn is as spitefull and injurious to us as the most profess'd Enemy we have. Should we not resent his wrongs and affronts the more deeply, and account him a more ill-natur'd Enemy than he who openly declares his spite? Should we not roundly tell him, that if he has no reason to treat us hardly, he ought to behave himself more civilly; and that the less we have deserv'd his spite, the greater is the wrong that he does us? That by such an unhandsome carriage he gives the World an occasion to believe that we have some way or other deserv'd ill of him, and that his professing the contrary is rather an argument of the goodness of his temper than a proof of ours? This is the judgment that every considering Man will pass upon the behaviour of those, that profess to believe the Excellency of Religion, and yet in Works deny it. For if Religion be that excellent and noble thing, that they believe it is, they have so much the less reason to dishonour it, and to endeavour to bring contempt upon it by so  
notorious

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notorious a disrespect to its holy Rules. Neither could they possibly do so much injury to it by believing as they live, as they do by living otherwise than they believe. For a Man's belief lies so secret, and his practice is so visible, that every Man will be apt to take his judgment concerning the Truth of Religion from what they see him to be, rather than from what he professes to believe. So that while such a Man professes not to have the same reason to discredit Religion, as the Atheist will seem to have, the difference that is in their Faith does make so much the worse for him that believes well, and yet lives the life of an Atheist. For every Man that lives as if there was no such thing as Religion, may as well, may ought to believe as the Atheist does. They both are thus far Enemies to the Truth of Religion, that the Atheist believes it to be a cheat, and the other lives as if it was so.

But however, the wickedness of those, that believe the Truth of Religion, be in these respects equally frightfull, if not more injurious to its reputation than that of the Atheist; yet there is this difference in their cases, that the former lies open to the force of all those arguments, that the Being of a God, the Immortality of the Soul, a Judgment to come, and a future state of Rewards and Punishments do furnish us with; but the latter does not. For he that believes these things, has a great deal of reason to be convinc'd at his way of living; and so no doubt but he will, when he comes seriously to think of it. But for the Atheist, there is no likelihood that these things should work upon him, who has this ready

answer

## Introduction.

answer to all that can be objected to him from these Principles; That they are all Lyes and Forgeries; That the World has been long imposed upon by these silly dreams; but for his part, he is the happy Man that has discover'd the cheat.

He then, that will persuade the Atheist, that he lives ill, must convince him that he is mistaken in his belief; and that the Principles of Religion are not things that are laid in our Minds by Education; or which we are train'd up to by the Art of Politicians, or cheated into by the Craft of Priests, but that they are founded in our Nature, and carry a suitableness in them to the reason of our Minds. This, I say, must be done, before this Man can be convinced that he ought to alter his way of living. For it cannot be denied, but that if he be right in his belief, he cannot be wrong in his practice: That if there be no God nor a future state, no tie or obligation upon him to live otherwise than as his Lusts incline him, he may, without any reflection upon himself, follow the worst inclinations of his Nature, and justify the greatest extravagancies he can be guilty of. Wickedness and Atheism are very fit to go together; And no Man, that does wickedly, can make it appear, that he acts wisely, but the Atheist, if he be but wise in the Nature of his Belief.

And this indeed all wicked Man are so sensible of, that at the last they generally are forced to fly to Atheism as the only refuge from that folly they are otherwise chargeable with. For a Man, that is resolved upon a wicked life, feels that he cannot sin with quiet and ease, so long as his Conscience tells him,

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him, that he lives contrary to his belief; and that according to what he believes, he must certainly be damn'd. So that rather than be haunted with such frightfull apprehensions, he chuses to ease his Mind of so troublesome a Faith. By doing this, he knows he shall get out of the reach of those fears, that check and appall him; and that when-ever he is upbraided for the beastliness of his actions, he has nothing to do but to laugh at the folly of those, that believe it to be a manly thing to be tied up from living according to his own pleasure, and the liberty of his own nature. And there is no recovering this Man, but by fixing those Principles in his Mind again, which for the sake of his Lusts he had turned out, and by convincing him, that there is nothing so certainly true and intrinsically good as Religion is. This is the design of the following Discourse; in which I shall consider,

1. What the Frame of our Nature does inform us; whether we be not so made, that without Religion we can give no account of what use our best Faculties are to us; or whether we be no better fitted for Religion than the Beasts are.

2. What the Well-being of the World does require; Whether Religion be of that indifferency to the good of Mankind, that it can be every-whit as well with us with it, as without it: Or, whether it be not of that absolute necessity to the happiness of the World, that without it there is no possibility of maintaining that Peace and Order by which the World stands.

3. What



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3. What it is that all Men do naturally wish for; Whether we find so little profit by Religion, that it is indifferent to us whether the Principles of it be believed, or its Rules observed and practised or no; or whether we do not feel so much benefit by it, as to desire that its Authority may be maintain'd.

4. What the common and received Opinion of Mankind concerning it is, Whether all Men do, or ever did, universally agree in the belief that Vice was as much for the honour and happiness of our Nature as Virtue is; or whether it be not the Universal sense of Mankind that there is a vast difference between Virtue and Vice.

5. What we may conclude from the Appetites and Aversions that belong to our Nature. Whether the bent of our Desires, and the strength of our Fears, do not imply a natural Suitableness of Religion to our Minds.

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which is as an universal introduction: but  
 it is best to appear, that there is something in  
 that does naturally dispose us for the way of  
 it as our nature, and which without it no good  
 account can be given of our being. For  
 we are tricked and cheated into the belief of its  
 fiction: For, according as we find we are deceived  
 we are to take an account of our being, and  
 in the midst of our doubts, does the  
 light, which is more than a flick of a candle

# DISCOURSE

OF  
 RELIGION

## SHEWING

Now, whoever considers himself, will find that  
 the spiritual faculties of an Animal, as I mean, that

## Its Truth and Reality, &c.

It is made up of a number of parts, but the  
 two of which it is made up, is a faculty of being  
 himself in worldly enjoyments, and capable

### CHAP. I.

The Truth of Religion proved from the Frame  
 of our Nature.

There is no better way to know how we  
 ought to live, and to satisfy ourselves in  
 the Truth or Falshood of this important  
 Question concerning the intrinsic Excellency of  
 Religion, and its natural relation to us, than by  
 considering what kind of Creatures we are, and  
 the utmost capacities of our Nature. For if upon  
 such an enquiry it does appear, that there is no-  
 thing in us, that has a respect to, and does necessa-  
 rily suppose the Being of such a thing as Religi-  
 on, we must allow the Atheist to be the wise Man,

B

who

## *The Suitableness of Religion*

who rejects it as an unreasonable imposition; but if it does appear, that there is something in us, that does naturally dispose us for the practice of it as our business, and which without it no good account can be given of, nor any thing sufficient for its happiness, we have no reason to think that we are trick'd and cheated into the belief of Religion. For, according as we find we are framed, we are to take an account of our Duty; and that which the Make of our Nature, does make our Duty, must be more than a trick or a contrivance.

Now whoever considers himself, will find, that he has both the sensitive Powers of a Beast, and the spiritual Faculties of an Angel: I mean, that he is made up of a material, visible part, by virtue of which he is under a necessity of burying himself in worldly Employments, and capable of the satisfactions that arise from the enjoyment of sensible Objects and bodily Pleasures: And besides, that there is something in him that makes him more valuable than the Beasts; and in respect of which, he looks upon them to be inferiour to him: And this part of us which we value our selves so much upon, is capable of being exercised upon other Objects, and of being employ'd to other purposes than our bodily Senses are. For if it was not, it would not at all differ from our sensitive part, and then we should have no reason to think better of our selves than of those Creatures, that have as quick a perception of bodily pain and pleasure as we have. But of all the Enemies

mits of Religion, there are none but think they are in some respect capable of other kind of perceptions than Creatures of mere sense are. And this Principle, by which we differ from them, does render us capable of thinking or considering what is best for us, of looking forward and backward, and debating with our selves upon the nature and several circumstances of our own actions; whether such or such a thing be fit and proper to be done, or whether that which we have done be apt to be corrected; and of checking and controlling our bodily inclinations and appetites, and not determining us to this or that course of actions, as they appear to be best for us.

And if this be the Frame of Humane Nature, as I doubt not but the greatest friend to a sensitive life, does find it is; it is plain there must be such a thing as Religion, because such a make does dispose us to it; and without it, this manly Principle must not onely be useless, but a torment to us.

§ 4. It disposes us for Religion, and capacitates us to make it our business and employment. For that, which makes us value our selves at a higher rate than we do a beast, is a thinking, considering Principle; we find it enables us to apprehend such Perfections as are not to be found in any created Beings, and of contemplating the Nature of things, that our Eyes never saw, nor our Ears ever heard. It is not onely in contemplating the Natures, and searching out the Properties, and discovering the Uses that belong to the

several Beings of this visible World, that this Faculty is employ'd in; but it goes further, and is apprehensive of such Wisdom, Power and Goodness as lies not within the compass of all that is visible before us. It can pass through all the Objects of Sense, and go beyond all the Boundaries of Time, and consider a Being, whose Nature is purely Spiritual, and whose Duration is Eternal. In a word, it can form an Idea, and apprehend the necessity of a Being, who is absolutely perfect. Now that this Faculty is capable of being thus employed in contemplating the Nature and Perfections of an infinitely glorious and most transcendently excellent Being, every Man, that will but make a trial of the power of it, may satisfy himself. For, when we consider how different the Natures and Perfections of created Beings are, and that Man, who values himself as the most excellent Creature in this visible World, does enjoy those Perfections, in which his greater Excellency does consist, in a very imperfect manner, what Difficulty can there be in apprehending a Being, that is not only more excellent than Man, but that has all those Perfections that Man is excellent for, and by which one Man is more Excellent than another in the most perfect manner? This the Atheist, as unwilling as he is to believe there is a God, is very sensible of. For he does not undertake to prove, that we have no such Idea, nor are capable of any such apprehensions; he does not pretend, that he finds no such power in himself, or that by the best use of his reason he can

not form any conceptions in his mind of a Being that is absolutely perfect; but the arguments, he makes use of, to prove there is no such Being, do suppose that we are apprehensive of such a Being. They pretend, that Education has laid this and all other Principles of Religion in our minds, and that the knowledge we have of invisible Beings is thrust upon us in our Childhood, as soon as we begin to have the least use of Reason.

Now supposing this was true, yet it supposes that there is such a faculty in us as is capable of discerning and receiving such things, and which consequently does exactly fit us for a life of Religion. For if there was not, how could Education train us up to such a Knowledge any more than a Beast? How can we be taught to know and adore a Being, whose Perfections are infinite, any more than an Ox or an Ass, if there be not something in us, that qualifies us for such a Knowledge as is not in them? All the teaching in the World would signify nothing to us, if there was not a principle in us, that was capable of receiving an instruction of this nature. And now since there is such a faculty in us as is capable of knowing an infinitely perfect Being, we have no reason to doubt whether there be such a Being or no, any more than whether there be any Visible Objects in the World, since we have Eyes to see them. If it be said that our Minds are capable of forming Ideas of things that are not. I grant it; but then when we do so, we are sensible that we do so, and of the manner how we do so. I mean,

the Mind is aware that all such fictitious and chimerical conceptions are Creatures of its own framing, and that there is something in Nature out of which it does make them. The framing of them is indeed the work of the Understanding, but it belches its matter out of which it makes them from something that has a real Existence. For it is impossible for the Mind to frame an Idea out of nothing; or to be taught to know any thing, that never had a Being, nor any thing out of which it could be framed. And such is our Idea of an infinitely perfect Being; we neither know that it is a Creature of our own Minds, nor is there any thing in this World out of which we can form such a conception. We neither know when we form'd it, nor how; nor is there any Being that is perfect enough to furnish us with Materials for it; but we find it highly agreeable to our Minds, when we come to the use of our Reasons; nor is our greatest negligence able to make us forget it, as it can all other acquired Knowledge. So that our having such an Idea, does necessarily suppose a Being that is infinitely perfect; and the agreeableness of it to our Minds, does prove that the knowing him is the most proper work of our Understandings.

But besides, by means of this faculty, we are capable of debating Matters in our own Minds, and advising with our selves what is best for us; we can take an account of the goodness or illnes of our actions, and either approve and commend, or judge and condemn our selves for them. And this



this no Man can deny but we have a power to do, who does not think it a noble thing to be a Fool; or that to act rashly and with precipitation, is very much for the glory and advantage of a Man. And why now are we thus made more than any other Creature? Why have we such a Faculty given us, if it be not our business to live with more consideration and discretion, with more prudence and fore-sight than the Beasts that have no understanding? What can we conclude from our having such a power, less than that we are to reverence our own Minds, and to stand in awe of our Consciences, and to dread doing any thing that is not for the honour of our Understandings? Since we are capable of consulting with our selves what is good or ill for us, does it not imply that there is a way of living which is for our advantage, and which, if we neglect it, will turn to our great hurt? And since we can call our selves to an account for our actions, and pass a judgment upon them, and censure them when they are not reasonable, may we not with good reason believe, that there are a sort of actions that are hurtfull to the Conscience, and that there is a time, when we shall feel the mischief of them, if we do not prevent it? However, the Enemies of Religion are pleas'd to make themselves sport with the name of Conscience, and to represent it as a Scarecrow set up to fright weak Minds, and to laugh at a Judgment to come as a principle, that has no good Evidence in Nature; yet I doubt not, but they have a secret sense both of the one and the other.

other. For how come they to argue against such a power, to fore-see what is good, and to censure what is ill, but by making that use of their Understanding, which they will not allow does belong to it? Is it not because they have thoroughly examin'd their own Nature, and consider'd what is agreeable to it, and what is not, and whether there be not some sort of actions, that Reason condemns, and others that it approves? Do they not speak their well-inform'd Judgment in the case, when they tell the World, that we are mistaken in our belief of these Principles, and that we have no power of judging our selves at all? If they do not, they speak at random, and are not fit to dispute the truth of these things: But if they do, their very arguing against such a power in us, ought to convince them that they are mistaken. For they consider and examine, and state the matter in themselves, and at last come to a judgment and resolution concerning it. And what is all this, but to make that use of our Understandings, which they pretend we cannot do with a respect to our actions. And besides, by this way of proceeding, they discover a secret sense that Humane Nature is capable of, having a Judgment pass upon it; which it could not be, if it was so framed, as to be capable of moving only one way, and going on in one course of actions, as the Beasts are: For it implies that we may abuse the Faculties of our Nature, and employ them to such Ends as deserve to be censured.

other.

H

But



But to proceed: It is not onely as we are capable of understanding the Principles of Religion, that we may conclude of its Truth and Reality, but from that power of determining in our selves, what course of life we will live, that belongs to our Nature. For by means of this Faculty it is very plain, that we are fitted for a life of Vertue, and not to go on in that one way, that our senses do undertake to lead us, and no other; which is the way of living, that belongs to the Nature of a Beast. For since we have such a Faculty as enables us to put restraints upon our bodily appetites, and to chuse whether we will hearken to the Laws of our Members, how could we be better fitted for a Life of Religion? For to make this use of our Wills, is to live virtuously; and 'tis this use that Religion instructs us to make of them. So that if we make any use of this excellent Faculty of our Nature, it is impossible but we should discover the suitableness of Religion to our Nature.

§ 2. And, 2. As the Faculties of our Nature do fit and dispose us for Religion, so they are of no use to us without it. And if this be true, as it certainly is, it comes so very near us, that methinks we should be very tender of Religion, lest we bring the worst kind of reproach upon our Nature. For it is a very vile thing to say of any Creature, that it is made for nothing, for, that is to say, it is good for nothing; and if we could believe there was such a Creature in the World, it would be the vilest thing in it. So that if that  
which

which makes us Men be really of no use at all to us, then we shall have little reason to value our selves for being Men; but a great deal to be ashamed of our Nature. For then we must look upon our selves to be the most pitifull and worthless Creatures in the World; and to say that we are Men, would be to say that we are the burden and charge, and consequently that we are the very refuse and scorn of all other Creatures. And of what use would our Understandings and Wills be to us, if there was no Truth nor Vertue to entertain and exercise them. Take away Religion, and it is impossible to give a satisfactory account, why we are taught more than the Beasts of the Earth, or made wiser than the Fowls of Heaven. A Faculty that makes us capable of Knowledge, is certainly, in its own Nature, of more Worth and Excellency, than our sensitive Powers. And if there be a Service proper and suitable to the greatness of such a Faculty, it must be something that is above the capacity of our Senses. Now what can this be less than the knowing God, and enquiring out the Perfections of his Nature, the looking beyond all material Objects into a World where pure and spiritual Beings inhabit, which, as I have already shew'd, we are enabled to do by vertue of our knowing Faculty. Such a Faculty can never be supposed to belong to our Nature, onely to enable us to discern the Excellencies of sensible Objects, and to tast the Pleasures that are in a visible World: For this we might do by the use of our Senses, if we had no Understanding;

standing; and our having Understanding, would not qualifie us for it without our Senses. So that to make use of our Understandings onely to discover the Glories of a visible World, is to use them to no other purposes than we do our Eyes; *i. e.* to such poor and sorry purposes, as we do not at all stand in need of them for. For as to the pleasing our Bodies with sensible Enjoyments, we are qualified well enough for that by those bodily Powers, whose Office and Duty it is to delight us with them. And if we have no other Objects to exercise our Understanding upon, we might as well have been made without it; for we have no need of a Faculty that is superiour to, and more excellent than our Senses, onely to reap the Pleasures that our Senses do sufficiently qualifie us for. For the Creatures, that have nothing but Sense, can see the Light, and tast their Meat and Drink with as much delight as we can, with all our Reason and Understanding. All the difference between us and them in this case is, That we can by the help of our Understanding dress our Meat with a little more Art, and show more curiosity in preparing and cooking our Dainties, and inventing richer Drinks than they are forced to be contented with. But is this such a use of our Understanding, as is sufficient to save its Reputation, and to prove that it belongs to us for something extraordinary, and that we have reason to glory in it? Is the Office of Catering for our Senses, and being a Drudge for our Bodies so Noble and Honourable, that upon this account we may value

due our selves for having a Faculty, that we can thus Employ more than the Beasts have? If this be the best use that we can put our Understanding to, we may as well believe we should have been as Honourable Creatures as we are, if we had had no such Faculty; or that it is a very proper Employment for a Prince, when he is cloath'd with all the Insigns of Royalty, to serve in the Kitchen or Stable of any of his Subjects.

If it be said, that our Understanding is of considerable use to us, as it enables us to manage our affairs with wisdom and discretion; and to acquaint our selves with the Natures and Properties of all other Beings. I grant that this is a very good use of so excellent a Faculty; but it is plain that this is not all that it is good for; and if it will serve us to higher purposes, as supposing there be a God, and all the Principles of Religion be true, it is certain it will, we must look upon it to be a very insignificant Faculty to us if there be no such thing as Religion; because we cannot then make use of it to the best and highest Purposes, that it is capable of being serviceable to us in. To use it onely in the management of our Secular affairs, is to make it a slave to our bodily Interests. And this is such a use, if it be all the use we can put it to, as does not make it appear to be a very creditable thing to be a Man; that it is either much for our honour or advantage that we are wiser than the Beasts. For all the difference then between a Man and a Beast is this. That they live with more simplicity, and less

care

are than we do; and that we have a Faculty that contrives ways to vex and torment our life with a great deal of solicitude and anxiety, and with perpetual labour and toil. And where lies our advantage of having such a Faculty, when we might eat and drink as much to the satisfaction of Nature, and live with less care and vexation without it? Or how is such an Employment to its honour? Is it for the credit of so noble a Faculty to be sent about the World to find out Entertainments for our Senses, or to be commanded by an immoderate love of the World to contrive ways to advance our Fortunes? Do we honour our Understandings, when we hire them out to our Lusts, to bring in all the Satisfaction they crave with a little more Delicacy than Nature requires, and to find out such ways of gratifying them as we could not do without it? Do we give reputation to our Minds, when we study how to make more plentiful and sumptuous provisions for our Bodies than a Beast can? We may indeed by the help of this Faculty contrive ways to improve our Estates, and to put our selves into an Honourable condition in the World: And it is not to be deny'd, but these are things that make a very glorious show, and have gain'd the repute of great advantages. But where lies that wonderfull advantage, that our Reason is to us in these respects? Of what mighty Service are the Riches and Honours, that we so eagerly covet, to us, that we may be able from them to give a good account of our being endowed with Reason? Does  
not

not their utmost Service relate to this life? Does not their utmost use consist in making us appear a little glorious, and enabling us to cloath our Bodies with gay Apparel, to feed 'em with Cost, and to build our selves stately Houses to dwell in? And is it not possible we should live without this? Can we not maintain Life, and keep up the health and vigour of our Bodies, unless we fare sumptuously, and be gorgeously clad? There is so little need of these things to these Ends, that I believe a great many might have lived longer, and with more health and comfort, had they either had fewer of the Honours or Riches of the World. For by being in a condition to gratifie our Luxury, we are in a condition to surfeit Nature, and to destroy our selves the sooner. So that such a use of our Understandings, as tends to put us into a condition, that may be so hurtfull to us, does not render such a Faculty very accountable to us.

Oct. 1. 1. And therefore Tully has made this wise Remark, *Si considerare volumus, quæ sit in natura Excellentia & Dignitas, &c.* If we consider what is the Excellency and Dignity of our Nature, we shall understand that it is a base thing to give way to Luxury, and to live with softness and delicacy. And then surely Reason can be of no great use to us, if all the use we can make of it, is for a life, that is so much unworthy of us. Neither is the usefulness of our Understanding much greater, by enabling us to know the Natures of things: For without Religion, this Knowledge

Knowledge is of no use at all to us, or onely of so much as it is serviceable to our present Interests. Now to know purely, for the sake of knowing, without any further prospect of good to us, is to be wise to no purpose; and to know onely that we may make our advantage of it in this life, does still suppose, that our sensitive part is the most Excellent. And in either of these two cases, we have no great reason to value our selves for having such a Faculty; neither is there any thing below Religion, that can show its true height and greatness.

And as our Understandings are of no great use to us without Religion, so our Wills are of much less. For if we take an account of the Nature and Power of our Wills; who can believe, that we carry such a Faculty in our Nature, as is able to command and check, to controul and restrain our bodily inclinations and appetites, onely that we might chuse to obey, and follow them with the more ease. If we were design'd to live according to the motions of our fleshly Lusts, the inclinations of our sensitive Nature, and the Laws in our Members, what have we to do with a Faculty, that has power to withstand them; a power, I say, that can forbid our Eyes to see, or Hands to execute the commands of our appetites, and put us out of the way of living, that we are design'd for? Surely we are the worst contrived of any Creature for that course of life, which we are to take, if while we are intended for a Life of Sense, we have a Faculty in us, that has  
a power



a power to hinder us from prosecuting it. We have no need of such a Faculty for the living as a Beast does; but a great deal of need to be without it. Because they that are without it, do obey the Commands of Sense much more freely and chearfully without it, than we possibly can with it. The very force and power of our sensitive Inclinations would be sufficient for such a life, if we had no will to chuse it; and our having such a Faculty, can contribute nothing either to the inclining us to, or to our taking any pleasure in it. But on the contrary, when-ever the Will does incline to such a life, it is by reason of a mighty force and violence that is put upon, and offer'd to it, by our bodily appetites, that deprives it of its freedom, and suffers it not to chuse, as it is naturally inclin'd, or to perform its own Office; so that either our Wills do signifie nothing to us, or from that power of checking the sensitive Motions of our Nature, which it is endued with, we must conclude, That a Faculty of this nature is never well employ'd, but in keeping our Bodies under, and putting our fleshly Appetites under the restraints of Temperance, Soberness, Chastity, and the like Vertues. Its power to controul our Appetites, and govern the Members of our Bodies, is of no use at all to us, if it be not our Duty to employ it in laying vertuous Habits in our Minds.



§ 3. But besides, that the best Faculties of our Nature are of no use to us without Religion; I come in the third place to shew that they must be a torment to us without it. And in order to this, I shall do these two Things: 1. Consider wherein the Happiness of a Man does consist. 2. Shew, That without Religion our best Faculties must be uneasie and troublesome to us.

First then, for the supporting the Cause of Religion. Let us consider wherein the Happiness of a Man does consist. Now Happiness in general does denote satisfaction: For no kind of Being can be said to be happy, so long as it is not at ease, and satisfied in it self. And this satisfaction does arise from the Enjoyment of a suitable Object; so that no Creature can be at ease, and satisfied in it self, if it wants any thing, that its Nature is capable of enjoying. Consider the condition of Plants, whose onely End is to grow up to such a state of Maturity, wherein they display their beauty, and yield the fruit they are design'd to give. Now, no Plant can do this, unless it be planted in a proper Soil, and enjoy so much of the influence of the Sun, as is needfull to draw forth its life and vertue; but for want of sap and nourishment it will languish and decay. So likewise the Beasts of the Earth, which are made for the enjoyment of sensible Objects, would be made in vain, if they had nothing to see, and to entertain their other Senses with. The happiness of a Beast is to have Meat and Drink enough; and to live among such Objects, as are gratefull

to his Senses; and without these, his life would be miserable. For as no Creature can be miserable, so long as it enjoys all the good, that it is capable of; and there is no Faculty in its Nature, that does want the Object, that is proper for it; so there can be no full satisfaction, where there is a Faculty, and nothing to entertain it. Thus to have an Eye, and yet nothing to see; or to be doom'd to perpetual darkness, would be a torment. So that Happiness is nothing else, but that rest and acquiescence that arises from the enjoyment of suitable Objects. And accordingly the Happiness of Man does consist in such a satisfaction of all the Powers of our Nature, as springs from the true and natural use of them, and the enjoyment of all that good, that belongs to our Nature. For so long as any Faculty does want the good, that belongs to it, our Nature can no more be at ease than the hungry Man is, who wants the Bread his appetite craves. Every Faculty has its appetite; and so long as any one appetite does gnaw, there will be restlessness and trouble.

But for the better explaining this matter, I shall consider these three Things:

1. That the satisfaction we aim at must be for our whole Nature.
2. It must arise from the true and natural use of all our Faculties.
3. From the enjoyment of that good that is suitable to the Nature of each Faculty.

1. The satisfaction we aim at must be for our whole Nature. And therefore, before we can arrive to the full and compleat Happiness, that we are capable of, we must understand our selves; and be acquainted with the utmost Excellency that belongs to us. For all Men do agree in this, That Happiness does consist in satisfaction; and that it is impossible that any Creature should be happy, that is not at rest and ease in it self: And therefore what-ever course of life Men take to, they pretend to aim at that satisfaction, wherein Happiness does consist. There is no Man that lives viciously, and follows the inclination of his sensual Appetite, but will tell you, that it is for the stilling the Cravings of his Appetites, which render him uneasie, that he lives as he does: That he finds it is impossible he should be at ease and quiet in himself, unless he makes those provisions for his Flesh, which are proper to lay the rage of his Appetites; and accordingly that it is onely in order to a happy life, that he hunts after sensual delights, and bodily gratifications. So that these Men do feel the truth of this, that so long as there is any Faculty in us that is not satisfied, we cannot be happy. And it must be confessed, that if he be not mistaken in himself, and Man be no more excellent a Creature than his way of life represents him, he is as wise for himself as it is possible for a Man to be, and does pursue all the happiness we are capable of. But if we be something more than Flesh and Blood, the satisfaction he aims at is not the compleat happiness

happinefs of a Man, because it leaves the most considerable part of our Nature unsatisfied. So that while we onely take care of our Bodies, and study how to please our Senses, and to still the cravings of our Appetites, though this be satisfactory to us, yet it is onely the satisfaction that belongs to a Beast. For could a Beast speak, it would tell us, that its utmost happinefs lies in the enjoying of every thing that the Body craves. And is this all the satisfaction that a Creature, that has a Soul to provide for, a Divine Mind to please, has to look after? No, since our Nature is so much more excellent than theirs, the happinefs, we must aim at, must be so too. Our provisions must be for our Souls as well as our Bodies, for our Understandings as well as our Senses, and our Consciences as well as our Appetites. We may have the pleasure and satisfaction that belongs to a Brute, when we pamper our Bodies, and keep not from our Eyes any good that they desire; but after all this, our Wants will be greater than our Enjoyments, and our Misery more than our Happinefs. For in this case we onely take care of half our Nature, and, which is worse, of that which is least worth our looking after.

2. The satisfaction we must aim at, must arise from the true and natural Use of all our Faculties. As it is impossible we should be happy, so long as we neglect any part of our selves, so it is likewise, unless we employ the several Powers of our Nature a-right. It is as much against  
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Nature to make use of an understanding Faculty in the service of our Bodies onely, I mean in worldly or bodily Solicitudes, what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, or how we shall drive on our worldly Aims, as if a Man should resolve to hear with his Eyes. And hence it comes to pass, that when Men make no other use of this Faculty than this comes to, after a life of many years spent in Thoughtfulness and anxious Solicitudes for the things that relate to their Bodies onely, they are as far at last from being happy, as they were at first. It is with Men in this case, as it is with Children, who think, if they were but at the top of such a Hill, as lies at a good distance from them, they should touch the Sun; and yet, when they come there, they are no nearer it than at first: And thus it would be, should they go round the World. Thus Men that use their Understandings onely in worldly or sensual Projects believe, that in compassing such a design, or enjoying such a good, they shall compleat their happiness; and yet when they have done it, they are as far from being satisfied as they were before: And thus they continue to be when they have gone the whole Round of their Lives. Now the reason of this dissatisfaction does lie in this, That they abuse their own Minds, and do not make a right use of their Understandings. For it is not the bare using our Faculties will make us happy, but the using them to their own true and proper Ends. And it must needs give great distast, and be very dissatisfactory

factory to our Minds, to have its noblest Faculty employ'd in mean and sordid Services, and not be permitted to discover its true and utmost usefulness to us; to drudge for the Body, and not do its own proper work, and consult its own good.

3. The satisfaction must arise from the enjoyment of that good as is suitable to the Nature of each Faculty. So the satisfaction of the Eye is from beholding the light and the beauty of those Objects, which the Day discovers: And the thing, that is dissatisfactory to this sense, is Darkness, or the want of an Object to behold; or else such an imperfect Light, as is not sufficient for a clear perception. But yet that which is gratefull to the Eye, does give no satisfaction to the Ear; and the best Melody in the World, as much as it pleases the Ear, does not at all affect the Eye. So it is likewise with a respect to the higher Powers of our Souls. They have some good that does peculiarly belong to them, from the enjoyment of which alone does arise their satisfaction: And 'tis as preposterous a thing for a Man to think himself happy without it, as it is to gratifie the Eye without light. Men may boast of the mighty Pleasures and wonderfull satisfactions they meet with in a voluptuous sensual way of living; but what pleasure can a Soul take in the delights of a Hog? How is it possible that the Mind of Man should be satisfied with the glories of the World, which is the pleasure of the Eye, or with those gratefull Sounds, that are  
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the delights of the Ear; or with those well-cook'd Dainties, that gratifie the Palate? The Mind and Soul of Man is no more made for these things, than the Eye is to rejoyce in the Melody of Sounds: But if we will as well satisfie them as our bodily Senses, we must search for delights, that are more accommodated to their Nature. Who can think that his Understanding is given him for no other pleasure than that, which his Eye or his Ear is sufficient to him for? Or, that he has a Soul which a Beast wants, onely to tast the Pleasures of a Beast? Bodily Enjoyments are onely proper to satisfie our bodily Senses; but the Happiness of a Man does suppose that our Souls, as well as our Bodies, are possess'd of that good, that they can take pleasure in. This then being the Nature of that Happiness we are to aim at, I come.

2. To make it appear, That without Religion it is impossible our Nature should be perfectly at ease, and fully satisfied. And this is very evident from what has been said concerning the Nature of that satisfaction that our Happiness consists in. For if there be something in us, that all the bodily Pleasures and Enjoyments of this World cannot satisfie; there will, after all the care we can take to provide for our Flesh, be something in us that is dissatisfied: And so long as there is any thing in us that is not satisfied, we must be troubled with such gnawings as will not suffer us to be any more at ease, than if we had Eyes, and yet nothing to see. But besides

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this, we have the tacit Confession of the Enemies of Religion against themselves. For while the satisfaction they aim at respects onely the Body, they leave their Souls out of their care and consideration. For no Man eats and drinks, or gratifies his Eyes and Ears for the ease and quiet of his Mind. They do not pretend to the satisfying their Minds, or delighting their Consciences, by indulging to the Pleasures of a sensual life. No, the Soul is so little concern'd in these things, and they are so sensible of the wrong and mischief they do themselves in this respect, that as soon as they resolve upon such a way of living, they, as it were, throw away their Souls, and tie up their Conscience, that they may without disturbance reap the satisfaction they aim at. They are forced to run away from themselves, and to avoid all communications with their own hearts; and find a necessity of being strangers at home, and of forbidding their own Minds to tell their dissatisfactions. For should they but ask their own Souls, what pleasure they take in their Rioting and Excess; or what content their bodily Enjoyments give them; they would let 'em know that these are things that grieve and vex, that make 'em weak and languishing; and that expose them to Death and Misery. They would complain of their hard fate of being compell'd to feed upon Husks and Trash, and deprived of the pleasure of their own proper Entertainments. And therefore every wicked Man is put upon hard shifts to avoid



all-interviews with his own Mind, lest he should be chid and upbraided for his brutishness in taking so little notice of himself: Which is an argument of an inward sense, that all is not right with him within; but that he carries those dissatisfactions in his breast, that if he should once hearken to them, would damp all his mirth. For why should he be afraid of meeting his own Conscience, if he was not sensible he has done it a great deal of wrong? Why should he avoid enquiring of his own Mind, whether his way of living be good for it, if he did not know beforehand it is not? He need not be such a stranger to himself, or afraid of meeting with such occasions, as will turn his Eyes inward, and make him consider what he has done, if he was really sensible, that he paid as much reverence to his Soul, as he shows fondness to his Body, and was as kind to the one as the other. So that if we appeal to the inward sense of those that neglect Religion, and live as if there was none; it is plain, that if there was really no such thing, our best Faculties would torment us with perpetual dissatisfactions. But I shall endeavour to give a more positive proof of this matter, by considering wherein the pleasure and satisfaction of the two great Faculties of our Souls, our Understanding and Will, does consist.

1. Our Understanding. Now every Man is very conscious to himself, that there is something in him, that is very inquisitive and searching into the true Natures of Things; and that he

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is very desirous to inform himself what good or ill does lie in those things, that are before him, and what profit or disadvantage he may reap from any thing he does. This then being so, it is plain that it is Wisdom or Knowledge alone that can satisfy our Understanding. By which I mean such an improvement of the Mind, as renders it capable of discerning Truth from Error, and, as much as possible, of securing us from those mistakes and illusions, that the darkness of our Minds is apt to betray us into. Or a Mind so well instructed in the Rules and Principles of Life, that it is at all times capable of judging rightly of the goodness and excellency, or the illness and deformity of our Actions. This sort of Knowledge is that which is called Practical, as the former is only Speculative. It is such a Knowledge, as has a respect to our Duty, and is to inform us how we are to live.

Now the true use of this Knowledge is either to deliberate before-hand, whether such or such an action be fit to be done; and so it is prudence; the Nature of which does consist in this, That it suffers us not to be rash and precipitate in our doings; but does consult and advise upon the Nature of every action, what good there is in it, or whether it is for our profit and advantage or no. Or else its Office is to look back, and to try and examine the Nature of those things we have done, whether they bear the stamp of Reason, and be squared by these Rules of Life that God has given us. And when our Under-standings

standings are thus employ'd, they bear the name of Conscience; whose peculiar Office and Duty it is to try, whether our Actions be good or ill, and either to accuse and condemn, or to excuse and justify the doing of them. These then being the several sorts of Knowledge, that the Understanding is capable of, it is evident we must be more or less happy, as we have more or less of this Wisdom and Knowledge, and that there is a possibility of satisfying this spiritual Appetite in all these respects; otherwise this Faculty will always be restless and uneasy. And,

I. As to the Knowledge of Truth. Who knows not that this is very grateful to the Mind, and that our Understanding can no more be at ease without it, than our Eyes are pleas'd with darkness? Ignorance was never lookt upon to be a lovely quality; nor did ever any Man make his boasts of it, as if it was as noble an Endowment as Knowledge is. And besides, Knowledge is so very agreeable to the Mind, that it never grows weary of it: It never creates any loathings and disgusts, or gives a Man occasion to repent himself of the time or pains he has laid out in acquiring it. And therefore the Wise Man recommended it to his Son as the most pleasant thing he could labour for: *My son, eat thou honey, because it is good, and the honey-comb, which is sweet to thy taste; so shall the knowledge of wisdom be to thy soul: i. e.* It will be extremely pleasant to thee as soon as thou relishest it; but yet not like those other satisfactions, that we seek for in the enjoy-

enjoyments of a lower nature, which, in a short time, lose their sweetness: For *when thou hast found it, there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.* Prov. 24. 14. *i. e.* It will never be irksome to thee, and give thee any reason to wish thou hadst laid thy time out better.

But yet though Knowledge be thus pleasant to the Mind, yet is not every Degree of it equally satisfactory. Every Truth, let it be of what Nature it will, does give some kind of content: But yet there is no Truth below those that Religion acquaints us with, so great and excellent as fully to set our Minds at rest. All other discoveries, but what this makes to us, are but like the dawnings of the day; which though they please our senses, yet chiefly please, because they give us the hopes and prospect of a more perfect light approaching. They do not satisfy, because they are fully commensurate to the largeness of our capacity; but because they necessarily infer the Being of a prime Truth, which alone is able to satisfy our desire of knowing. This must be supposed, or else there will be an appetite in us, that nothing can satisfy; and where there is an unsatisfied appetite, there must be uneasiness and disquiet. An imperfect Knowledge is no more sufficient to satisfy the Mind than an imperfect Light can the Eye. And how is it possible that we should arrive at such a perfection of Knowledge from the Contemplation of the Natures and Perfections of Things as are bound-

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ed? Could we know all that is to be known concerning all created Beings; yet since all that is to be known concerning them does lie in a certain narrow compass, it could not satisfy the Mind, because no Knowledge that has its bounds can. If a certain degree of Knowledge could set our Minds at rest, why are we not satisfied with the first discoveries of any Truth? Why do we waste our spirits, and wear away our strength in driving our Thoughts further and further, as if there was really no end of knowing? Does not this growth of our desire tell us, that either there is or ought to be a Knowledge that is infinite; I mean an infinite Object, that will for ever employ our Thoughts, and exercise our Reason, and furnish us with perpetual Matter for Contemplation; and that if there be not, there is not such a height of Knowledge as will give our Minds full content? I know indeed that the several sorts of Knowledge that are in the World do find us work enough; and were we to spend all our time in searching the depth of any one, we should hardly ever come to the bottom of it. But then it is to be consider'd, that this does not arise from the Nature of it, but the Imperfection of our own Understandings: It is not because the Perfections they present us with have no end, but because we want Light to discover them. So that this is so far from proving that there is Knowledge enough in the World without Religion to satisfy us, that it proves the quite contrary; That if there be no such thing as Religion,

gion, our Understandings must necessarily be a perpetual Torment to us for want of something to satisfy them. For all other Knowledge is either dissatisfactory, because it has its limits, or because it is obscure, and cannot easily be come at. If we cannot attain to the utmost Truth that it contains, our Ignorance will be our Reproach and Torment; but if we can, our Understanding will be dissatisfied, because it has nothing more to know, and must for ever afterwards be forced to lie idle. But now it is the peculiar Excellency of Religion, that it presents us with the sublimest Truths, sets before us Perfections that are infinite; and yet delivers them with that plainness, that its severest Enemies do not pretend, that its discoveries are either intricate or dark. And besides, there is no other Knowledge, besides that of Religion, that does immediately concern, or is of use to our Minds: But either it is of no use at all to us, or its usefulness reaches no farther than the Interests of our Bodies. And what a Calamity must it be to our Mind, to know nothing that is for its own good? What a dissatisfaction must it be to our Understandings, to search and enquire after Truths that they can reap no profit by; and that all the Knowledge they can possibly attain to, is no way serviceable to their own Interests? But,

2. As to that Practical Knowledge, which consists in our being acquainted with those Rules of Life, whereby we are to judge of what is good or ill for us, who does not feel the great benefit

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and advantage it is to us? What is it that Men do more value themselves upon, and take greater pleasure in, than in an Opinion of their own Prudence and Discretion? That they make use of Judgment and Consideration for the directing their ways; and by wisely weighing before-hand the different circumstances of Things, do take care to avoid that which is hurtfull to them. Every Man in his Employment does find a great deal of contentment in himself from such a use of his Understanding; and as oft as by a carefull consideration he prevents any damage to his affairs, he is extremely pleas'd to think that he has not acted like a Fool. But, on the other hand, with what vexation do Men reflect upon their own folly, when by a careless over-sight or a hearty rash action they have prejudiced their affairs? Now what does all this serve for, but to satisfy us, that it is impossible that any thing but Wisdom should content the Understanding of a Man. In this case the question lies between Wisdom and Folly: Whether it be as agreeable and satisfactory to our Minds to be destitute of the Art and Skill to manage our selves to our own infinite Advantage; or to be so wise as to know what is really best for us? Now it is plain, that in all the concerns of this life, no Man does reckon it any part of his felicity, that he knows not how to manage his Trade and Calling, his Affairs or Estate with discretion; but is forced, for want of Judgment, to venture at all, without ever consulting what will be the  
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issue of it. No Man does think that the foolish imprudent Man does enjoy the most satisfaction in his Mind, even upon the account of his folly: But every Man laments it as a misfortune, when he feels the Effects of it. And since then no Man is willing to run himself upon any inconvenience, if he can avoid it, it is a plain argument, that it is a very gratefull thing to the Mind to be capable of discerning between Good and Evil.

But then the Question is, Whether there be no other Prudence but that which has a respect to this life: and whether this be sufficient to satisfy our Minds? It is certain that the Understanding does find a great deal of pleasure in being able to discover and prevent those Temporal inconveniences, which would give us a great deal of trouble. But then this is onely such a pleasure as one friend takes in the prosperity and good fortune of another. It is upon the account of the intimacy that is between the Soul and the Body, that the Mind rejoices at the success of that advice and counsel whereby the condition of so near a friend is better'd. But where lies the great Good of all this to it self? What is it the better for its own Prudence, if it be not prudent for it self? Is it likely that its joy for the good state it procures for the Body, should over-weigh its dissatisfaction for acting foolishly in its own concern? Or may it be imprudent for it self, without any trouble, when every Man feels the Calamity of being indiscreet in  
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the management of those affairs that respect the Body? If there be no Religion, then it can be under no Obligation to avoid any sort of Actions, but as they cross our Temporal Interests: And if so, there are no kind of Actions that are peculiarly gratefull to the Mind, and which the Reason of a Man can take pleasure in, but as it finds the Body and its Interests benefited by it. And if every thing be reasonable or unreasonable, as it is either for the profit or hurt of our present concerns, Reason is of no use at all to the Mind; nor is it possible for it to do any good to it self by all its Prudence; but Folly and Wisdom must be equally gratefull to it. But if there be a sort of Folly that the Mind is afflicted with, even when the Body receives no hurt by it, it must be because there are some Actions so reasonable in themselves, and others so deform'd, that it cannot be well at ease, but by acting as advisedly for it self as it does for the Body. And what does all this import, but that there are such Rules of Life, as having a peculiar respect to the good of the Soul, the Mind of Man cannot be satisfied in it self, unless it be well skill'd in them? For it must assuredly be as sensible of its own good and harm, as it can be of that of the Body; and be as deeply affected with that Folly, which occasions the doing any thing that is unreasonable, as that which is attended with Temporal inconveniences.

3. I proceed to that other sort of Knowledge, that respects our Actions when done; and consists in a serious re-viewing and examination of them, and a capacity to pass a judgment upon the goodness or illness of 'em. And there is as much satisfaction accrues to our Mind from this capacity and skill, as from any other. I do not suppose, that it is any pleasure to the Mind to take an account of those things, which we have done with precipitation and folly; or to call those Actions before it, which threaten a Man with vexation and trouble. But then the reason, why the Mind takes no pleasure in such a re-view, is not, because this kind of Knowledge is not delightfull, but because it is no delightfull thing to a Man to know that he has done foolishly. The disquiet arises from the folly and indiscretion, that we find in our doings, which were never believed to be satisfactory to the Mind; but not because it is a grievous thing to make use of our Understandings to this purpose. For it is as gratefull a thing to the Mind to be thus employ'd, as it is to take a view of what is fit to be done, before we do it. And it is certain, that in all the concerns of this life, it is accounted a very happy thing to have the Art of looking forward and backward, and of taking an account how our affairs stand; what it is that contributes to our success, or what is the cause of any miscarriage in our affairs; that we may the better know how for the future to avoid the Rocks we have split upon, or to compass our

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Aims in the like case. This is lookt upon to be a necessary means to thrive in the World; and Men generally account it a great weakness not to be able to give an account how Matters stand with them. Now this is a certain argument, that our Understandings are design'd for such an employment; and that this consciousness of our own good or ill condition is a Knowledge the Mind cannot be satisfied without.

But without Religion it is impossible, that a Man should have this satisfaction. For, take away Religion, and every Man is at liberty to do what he pleases; and if every thing be lawful to be done, nothing can offend a Man's Mind: And if no sort of Action can give any offence to the Mind, it is in vain to pretend a consciousness in our selves at any time, that we have done something that is not for our good: 'Tis true, were we no better than Brutes, we should be capable of pleasure and pain from the different Objects, that strike upon our Senses: But then we must bear the Evil that should befall us, as the effect of our hard fortune; but should have no reason to reflect upon our selves with anguish for contributing to our own misfortune, by our own errors and imprudence. So that either we must acknowledge, that we are capable of throwing our selves into ill circumstances by doing foolishly, or of putting our selves into a good condition by acting prudently; or we must deny, that ever we either are or can be conscious to our selves of having done

any thing, that we ought to repent of, or rejoyce in: which is contrary to the common Sense of Mankind. For to allow of such a consciouſness in our selves, and yet at the same time to say that all our Actions are in their own nature equally lawfull; is to maintain a contradiction in our own nature. For to be conscious to our selves at any time, that we have done something that is not good for us, does suppose that there are some sort of Actions, that we ought to avoid: And to maintain that every thing is equally lawfull, is to say, that we can do nothing that is hurtfull to us, or that we ought to be careful to avoid. And what is this but to say, that we ought not to do some things, because they are mischievous; and that we may do every thing, because nothing is hurtfull to us?

This is an argument, that the Enemies of Religion are sufficiently sensible of the force of. And therefore lest it should compell them to acknowledge, that there is such a thing as Religion, they have no way left but to laugh Conscience out of the World. So that though they are sensible, that our own folly is oftentimes an occasion of many miscarriages in our Temporal affairs; yet they will not allow, that there is any Action so naturally Evil, as to give disgust to the Mind, by reason of its own deformity, but onely as it is attended with some Temporal inconvenience. To which I reply;

1. That this, as has been said, does suppose the Mind to be the vilest part of us: That it is onely

only to do the Office of a Slave to the Body, by taking care of its concerns. 2. This makes it impossible ever to avoid any of those inconveniences that we complain of. For if nothing that we do be Evil in its own Nature, it is only by mere accident, that some of our Actions are mischievous to us. And if so, it is not possible to know when we are to do, or not to do any thing that we do; because that which is foolishly done at one time upon the account of the mischief it occasions, may be wisely done at another, because to our advantage. Our experience may tell us what we should not have done, when it is too late to help it; but it cannot satisfy us whether we should never do the same thing again or no; because it depends upon another trial whether the same Action will be attended with the same ill Consequences. So that, 3. Let them say, Whether we be under an Obligation to avoid doing those things, which we find to be to our detriment. If we be, let them satisfy us how we can do this, if there be no such thing as Religion: For if there be nothing that is in its own nature Evil, there is nothing that is in its own nature not fit to be done; nothing at which our Minds can take a distast before it has made a trial of it: And how then shall we know how to manage our selves so, that our Actions may not give us reason to complain of our selves? But if we be not, what signifies it to us, that we are afterwards conscious to our selves of the Good we have done to, or of that



Evil we have brought upon our selves? So that Conscience, or that secret Sense of the profit or disadvantage our Actions are to our Temporal affairs, that they allow of, must needs be a great trouble and torment to us, if we cannot make any use of it to our future advantage. It will upbraid us with that folly, which we cannot possibly help for the future, if there be no such thing as Religion; and serve for nothing but to afflict us with its own dissatisfactions in being forced to bear the Wounds, that our imprudence gives it, without ever hoping to remedy it.

If then the being able to take an account of the goodness or illness of our circumstances be accounted an advantage in our Nature, as all Men are very sensible it is in respect of the affairs of this life, it is of absolute necessity that Religion be really true, not only for the making Conscience usefull to us, but for the preventing those dissatisfactions it would every moment be exposed to, by lying at the Mercy of our bodily Lusts, and by being obnoxious to the ill consequences of our frequent follies. If it be a happy thing to know the true state of our own condition, Religion is the most comfortable thing we can think of; and there cannot a worse thing befall us, than to have it proved beyond contradiction, that there is no such thing as Religion. For Religion, by instructing us in the real differences between Vertue and Vice, does furnish us with that Knowledge, as enables Conscience to determine rightly concerning our state,  
and



and to be a faithfull Monitor to, and certain Director of us in every difficult case.

And, 2. As our Understandings would labour under perpetual dissatisfactions without Religion, so would our Wills. As all Men are sensible that they have something in them that is not satisfied with any thing but Knowledge; so there is none but feels a Power within them, that can give Laws to their Senses; and either permit or forbid our bodily Inclinations to bear rule in us; a power whereby he can either chuse to do or not do any thing that he discovers to be either good or hurtfull to him. So that it is plain, that nothing below Vertue can give satisfaction to so excellent a Faculty.

By Vertue, I mean a firm Purpose in our selves to do nothing but what is good; or a determination of the Will to those things, which, upon a strict and thorough Enquiry, we find to be really best for us. So that Vertue is not a thing that lies at the mercy of any thing without us to deprive us of; neither is it a thing, that is not in our own power, but is seated in our very Souls; and is nothing else but the constant and unmoveable purpose of the Will to prosecute those designs that are of real and great advantage to us. For, since our Wills are capable of obeying the Impulses of our sensual Appetites, and yielding to the force of bodily Inclinations; or of following the Commands of Reason, we become either vertuous or vicious, as we yield either to the one or other of these. To hearken

to the Temptations of the Flesh, and to let our Appetites rule and govern our Wills, is to be vicious; because, in this case, the Will is removed from the steadiness of its purpose, and is compell'd to chuse that which Reason cannot approve or allow to be the best for us. But we then show the Vertue of our Minds, when our Wills do move as Reason commands, and our Understandings direct. So that Vertue does suppose such a firmness and resolution of Mind, as is not to be broken by the strongest On-sets of our sensual Appetites: For he that wavers, and is carried away with every gust of Temptation, who can neither prevail with himself to deny his Appetite, when any sensual Gratification offers it self, or to withstand the force of any bodily Inclination, is a Man of no more Vertue than he is of Resolution. But then this steadiness of our Resolution must follow the Judgment, that Reason, after a most diligent enquiry, makes of the goodness of any Action. For, unless our Resolution has a respect to that which we know is really good, it is so far from having any thing of Vertue in it, that it is a sinfull Wilfulness, or an obstinate bending our Spirits to such a thing against all reason. So that every Man, that is firmly resolved either to do or not to do a thing, which carries nothing of good or ill in it, nothing whereby the Conscience can be either recreated or hurt, does not merit any thing of Praise for the Vertue of his Mind: For those things, that have nothing of good nor ill in them,  
and

and can neither make our condition better nor worse, are not matters of Vertue, but they may either be done or left undone without any damage to us. But that Resolution of our Mind is our Vertue, which has a respect to some-thing that is really good and excellent, and tends to our great advantage and honour.

This then being the Nature of Vertue, either we must acknowledge that there is such a thing as Religion; or we must deny, that there is a power of chusing its own Actions in the Soul: For if there be no such thing as Religion, there is nothing either good or ill for us to chuse or refuse. And if we be so framed as to have but one way of living before us, we must disclaim a power of determining our selves to any other: For such a power does suppose that we are framed for two different kinds of Actions; and that it behoves us to be very cautious how we determine our selves. It necessarily supposes that all things are not equally good for us, else it is to no purpose to have a power to refuse any thing; but that we may chuse amiss, and thereby put our Souls into a very uneasy condition. And therefore the Wise-man observes, *That he that getteth wisdom; i. e. who is well instructed in Religion, loveth his own soul; and he that keepeth understanding, shall find good, Prov. 19. 8. i. e.* This is the great advantage of Wisdom and Vertue, that by it a Man does gain an Empire, and rule over himself: He gets his Heart into his own possession, and becomes the Master of his  
bodily

bodily Affections and Lusts. And he that thus manages himself, does discover the truest friendship to his own Soul; for he best consults its good and happiness. And thus *Epictetus* considers the Will as an instrument either

*Arrian. in  
Epict. l. 1.  
p. 99.*

of good or ill to us, *Τέτον νόμον, ὁ Θεὸς τέθεικε, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀναρτὸν διδόναι ἑαυτῷ λάβε.* God has enacted

this Law, That if we desire any good, we should ask it of our selves: For, saith he, the Nature of Good and Evil does lie in the disposition of the Will. And again, *Θεὸς δὲ μὴδὲν ἔδωκεν ἡμῖν τῆς διανοίας πείρας, &c.* God has not given us this Faculty to enable us to bear all Events with an undaunted Mind onely; but, as a King and a Father, that nothing may exercise a Power and Authority over us, but that we may have a full Power over our selves. But what can such a Power signifie to us, if we cannot chuse amiss, and nothing we can do can hurt us? Since then there is such a Faculty in our Souls, either we must believe we are made for Religion, or to be a vexation to our selves. For,

1. It is onely Religion and Vertue can be the true and proper Employment of this Faculty.

2. Without it, it cannot maintain its freedom.

1. It is Vertue alone that is the true and proper Employment of such a Faculty. For who can

be

believe, that by obeying the Lusts of his Flesh, and following the Inclinations of his sensual Appetites, he lives like a Being that has a power over his own Actions? Does any Man think, that he shows the power of his Will to chuse Good, and refuse Evil, who indifferently allows himself in the practice of any thing he has a mind to? Was Man design'd onely to live a sensual life, he would not have stood in need of such a Faculty: For the very Propensities of his bodily Appetites would have been sufficient to such a purpose. For what need can a sensitive Creature have either of Understanding or Will to see those things that are pleasing to the Eye, or to tast those things that are delightfull to the Palate. Whether we were capable of chusing these things or no, our Eyes and other bodily Senses are sufficient for them. And there is no Man that prefers a sensual, before a vertuous Life; but before he can take any tolerable kind of satisfaction in it, he finds himself under a necessity of offering Violence to his Will, and forcing it to comply with his lower Inclination. So that if a Man was design'd as much for a sensual, as a vertuous Life, he would be the worst fitted for it of any Creature; because he carries a Faculty in him, whose Office it is to withstand his sensitive Inclinations. The Beasts have nothing in their Nature, that does controul their Senses, or forbid their gratifying their Appetites to the full: But where ever they find a full Pasture, they graze and fill their Bellies, without considering, whether they

they be guilty of a Trespass or no, because they have nothing but a want of Appetite to restrain them at any time. But Man is certainly very ill contrived for a life of Sense, and the happiness of a Beast; because his Will, till it be wholly subdued, has a Power to forbid his Appetites from craving. Since then there is such a Power in our Wills, to put our Appetites under restraints; and that Sense cannot gain a Command over us, till it has gain'd the Mastery over our Wills, and made them of no use at all to us; who can doubt but the happiness of our Souls must arise from that Vertue, which consists in giving Laws to our Bodies. For to be sure their happiness must arise from the true and natural use of their several Powers; neither is it possible they should be in an easie state, so long as any of their Powers are either useless to them or abused; any more than the Body can be in a healthfull, vigorous state, so long as there is a dead Member belongs to it. When therefore we maintain firm and steady Purposes in our selves, to do nothing but what is for our good, notwithstanding all the Temptations we have to the contrary, we must needs as much delight our Souls by employing their Faculties a-right, as we do our Bodies, when we make use of our Eyes to see, and our Ears to hear. And, on the other hand, it must be as grievous to the Soul to have the Authority of so Sovereign a Faculty despised, as it is an Affliction to the Body not to satisfie its Appetites at all. If Vertue and Vice be onely Names, the Power that  
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the Will has to give Laws to our sensitive Appetites, if we make use of it, will give a great deal of trouble to us: But if we do not, how can it chuse but be a great dissatisfaction to the Soul to be troubled with a Faculty, that is of no real use to it. So that in either case, without Religion, we cannot enjoy that content and ease in our selves, which springs from the natural use of our Faculties. And especially,

1. Since without Vertue we cannot maintain the freedom of our Wills. 'Tis true indeed, if there be no such thing as Religion, we are at liberty to follow the most violent Inclinations of our Nature: But this is a Liberty, if we make use of it, that deprives the Will of its Sovereignty, and makes it an unreasonable thing for this Faculty to interpose its Authority for the restraining us in any case. And accordingly it is the unhappy condition of every Man that lives by no other Laws but those of his Members, and is under the power of his bodily Appetites, that he is never true to any good purpose; but having lost the liberty of his Nature, he wills and chuses, loves and desires, hates and flies things onely as a present inclination commands him. And how is it possible that the Soul should be in an ease, satisfied state, when it is not suffer'd to move according to its own Will, but the Will and Pleasure of a Lust; nor to seek its own satisfaction, but is forced to serve the Will of a Tyrant? No, it is Vertue alone can be the delight of the Soul, because it is that alone that sets it at liberty, and  
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maintains it in its own proper freedom. When a Man is bravely resolved in himself, that no Lust shall be his Master; that his bodily Appetites shall not crave beyond the Measures of Nature, nor his Sense usurp upon his Reason, and assume the office of judging what is good or bad for him; he asserts that Liberty, which is the delight of the Soul, and maintains that just Authority of his Will, which the Mind rejoices in. This is so Essential to our happiness, that even bad Men do insist upon it as the reason why they live as they do. They complain, that it is a very hard case for a Man to be obliged to lay restraints upon the Appetites, that God has planted in his Nature, and to deny himself of the free use of any of his natural Powers. For to what purpose has he Eyes, say they, if he may not look upon gratefull Objects? or why is he made capable of tasting the Pleasures of a feasted Appetite, if he must put a knife to his Throat? Now although this implies a very unjust Charge against Religion, as if it did forbid us to give that satisfaction to our Appetites, which is reasonable; yet it does grant that a Man cannot be happy, so long as any of the Powers of his Nature are in slavery.

To know then whether Vertue or Vice be most for our happiness, we have nothing to do, but to consider which does best maintain our freedom. Now the freedom, that the vicious Man pretends to, lies onely in his living a licentious course of life, as if he had no Reason nor

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Conscience, no Faculty to consider with, nor no Power to bridle his Appetites, but was as very a beast, as those that graze in the Fields. And it is sure, if we take away Religion, we have nothing to do either with our Reason or our Wills: But if we make use of them, they will vex us by not suffering us to humour the extravagancies of our Appetites: And if we do not, the slavery of our Wills will be our Torment. For it can no more be an easie thing for the Soul to see it self in bondage, or to hear Conscience groaning under a heavy yoke; or to have no more benefit of its own Will, than if we had no power at all to live better, than it is to our Body to feel it self loaden with Chains. Wicked Men, by breaking loose from the restraints of Religion, do indeed set their Lusts at liberty: But when they have done this, what Authority do they leave their Wills? What is there in them for this Sovereign Faculty to command and controul? And if this be a Liberty that our Wills can take pleasure in; if they can tamely bear the affront that is put upon them, when they are compell'd to serve divers Lusts; and taught, that their Authority is useles; and that they have nothing to do to hinder us from pursuing the Pleasures of a sensual life, we may esteem Religion as mere a Trifle as our Lusts would persuade us it is. But if nothing of this nature can be satisfactory to a Faculty, that was designed for Rule and Dominion in us, we need do no more than look within our selves to know both

both the Necessity and Reality of Religion. For since it cannot be well with us without it, we have very good reason to believe it is naturally suitable to our Minds.

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## CHAP. II.

*From the Necessity of Religion, to the Well-being of the World.*

THE Appetite to Society, that is planted in us, does procure us so much good, and furnish us with so many advantages, that there is no People so barbarous, but are sensible of the usefulness and benefit of Neighbourhood. 'Tis by the helps of Society, that we, with the more ease, drive on our Secular Aims; 'Tis by Commerce and Traffick that we partake of the Products of the whole Earth, and People, at the greatest distance, are mutually helpfull and beneficial to each other; 'Tis by Conversation that we make each other's Lives comfortable and pleasant; and communicate those Improvements, which we daily find to be of extraordinary use to us. And upon this account it is, that we go into Communities, and establish Governments, and by mutual Leagues and Alliances do endeavour to fetch the Succours we want from the furthest parts of the Earth. Since then Communion and Fellowship are both so agreeable to our Nature, and of such

advan-

advantage to us; nothing can surely be very gratefull to us, that tends to deprive us of the benefit of Society, by dissolving them, and forcing us, like wild Beasts, to seek for solitary Caves in Desarts and unfrequented Wildernesses. So much as our Nature is an Enemy to Lonesomeness, so much does it teach us to abhor every thing that threatens us with it; and incline us to favour that which contributes to the peace and prosperity, the stability and durableness of Society. For either there must be some way and means to knit and unite the several Members of a Society together, or it is to no purpose to enter into it at all. What advantage will it be to live in a City, if we have no assurance that the Multitude we live among are not as much at liberty to do us a mischief, as to do us good? Or what profit shall we reap from a nearness of habitation, if he who is my Neighbour is thereby furnished with a fair opportunity to cut my Throat? To have an appetite to Society, and yet to have no way to make our living together usefull, is to suppose, that we are made for misery; I mean, either to be tormented by an Appetite, which it is dangerous to satisfy; or to expose our selves to innumerable hazards by satisfying it. And without Religion, this is the case of all Mankind. We are prompted from within to wish and seek for the Neighbourhood of those of our own Blood; but at the same time we desire to live by such as are under no obligation to be helpfull to us, nor any restraint not to wrong or injure us,

if there be no Religion. This all States and Societies of Men are so well aware of, that for the preserving the peace and welfare of every particular Member, and to prevent a dissolution of the whole, they find it needfull to unite their several Interests into one publick Good; and by Laws and Rules of living, to make their associating together usefull to them. And 'tis by this means, that the Enemies of Religion do suppose that all the Good we expect from Religion, is sufficiently provided for; and all the mischief prevented, which we believe would come upon us by the want of Religion. Now for the sake of Religion, I shall observe,

1. That these persons, while they declare against Religion, are forced to have a recourse to something in the lieu of it, for the preventing that confusion, that would break in upon the World.
2. That what they have a recourse to, is not sufficient without Religion.
3. That it is very unjust and unreasonable.
4. That it is Religion alone that does sufficiently provide for the Well-being of the World.

1. That these persons, while they declare against Religion, are forced to have a recourse to something in the lieu of it, for the preventing that confusion, that would otherwise break in upon the World. For why do they not decry

all kind of Government as an unjust Usurpation upon the Liberties of Mankind? Why do they not condemn those Laws that restrain the Violences of humane Passions, and the exorbitancies of unsatisfied Appetites? Why do they not, when they have set Man at liberty from the Laws of Religion, the Terrors of Conscience, and the Dread of a God, plead likewise for his freedom from humane Impositions, and teach him to despise the Authority of all Secular Powers; and endeavour to persuade the World, that Prisons and Punishments are the Inventions of Tyrants, and the Marks of our Slavery? This, I am sure, they ought to do, if Religion be so great a Cheat as they would pretend. They ought to carry on the discovery a little further, and prove that it is as much an Encroachment upon that Liberty, that belongs to our Nature, to be controul'd by the Laws of a Man, as of a God; and that one Man has as much right to tear and devour another, as any Beast of prey has to live upon his spoil. If we must take it as a mark of their kindness to us, that they are for setting us at liberty from the bondage of Religion, why don't they extend their generosity, and exclaim as zealously against the restraints of humane Laws; and tell the Governours of the World, that they are to blame in sending Thieves and Murderers to the Gallows or Gibbet? For what benefit has the World by their wonderfull discovery, if when we have learnt to despise the Notion of a God, we must still be kept in awe by the Authority of a



Prince; and after we have shaken off the fear of a Hell, must still be afraid of doing those things, that Religion condemns, for fear of the Sentence of a Secular Judge. Their great Wisdom has so little mended our condition, if we gain no more liberty by our Infidelity than we had before, that, for ought I can see, a Man may every-whit as well believe there is a God, and dread his wrath as not: For by allowing of Laws and Government, they grant there are some kind of Actions not fit to be tolerated; and that there are such Passions in our Nature, as will not suffer us to enjoy the benefits of Society, unless they be chain'd up. So that while they set themselves against Religion, they confess it cannot be well with the World, if we do not live as Religion requires; and take care to punish those Enormities that Religion threatens with everlasting Burnings. They would persuade us, that there is no God to punish us, nor no Hell to torment us in; but yet they tell us, we must be true and just, faithfull and honest, kind and good-natur'd; and that the rage of our Passions, and the violence of our Actions, do deserve to be punish'd: That it is not equally good for the World, that Men should employ their Wit and Understanding to defraud and cheat, or their Wills to oppress and do wrong, as to consult each other's good, and to do Acts of kindness and humanity: But that since there is no Religion to direct us, nor Conscience to keep us in awe, we must provide for our own peace and happiness as well as we can,



can, by establishing such Rules as it shall be dangerous for any Man to transgress. And what less does this imply, but that Religion is so beneficial to Mankind, that it is a thousand pities but its Principles were really true; and that it is very convenient, that the World should be under those restraints it lays upon us? So that the Atheist gets nothing at all by denying the Truth of Religion; but while he labours to free Men from those Terrors which it does awe our Minds with, does find it necessary to lay them on again, by subjecting those that live otherwise than Religion requires to the vengeance of a humane Authority. But to how little purpose, will appear, if we consider,

1. That what they have a recourse to, is not sufficient without Religion. For by endeavouring to free Men's minds from the Terrors of Religion, they destroy those internal Obligations of Conscience, which are of more force to withstand the confusions and mischiefs they are afraid of, than all the Laws and Punishments that the Wit of Man can invent. For let but Conscience bear rule within, and it will not only tie men's Hands from doing wrong, and their Tongues from speaking falsely; but their Thoughts from contriving, and their Hearts from conceiving them. Let it but have a power of flashing Eternal flames in their faces, and it will not leave Men so much as the Will to do any thing that tends to discompose the World. This is so visible a Truth, that it is very strange the Atheist

is not sensible of his own folly in undermining a Principle that is so much for his interest; and the contradiction he puts the World upon, in maintaining a necessity. That we should live as if there was such a thing as Conscience, and yet at the same time believe there is none. For if it be necessary to walk honestly, and to do justice; to silence our passions, and correct our humours; to converse with affability and courtesie, and to make society good and usefull, by doing all the good that is in our power to each other; what more could we be obliged to, if he allow'd as much Conscience among Men as Religion commands? But since he is an enemy to Conscience, he ought not to press Men with a necessity of any of those Vertues, that Religion does; but how convenient soever he finds it for the World to have them establish'd, he can in reason blame no-body but himself, if they be not, because he has left it to the choice of Men whether they will or no. But when this is done, will he say it is sufficient without Conscience to put the World into a quiet state, and to secure to us all the advantages of Society? Since he is sensible of the inconvenience of leaving Mankind to an unrestrain'd Liberty, is the Dread of a Civil Magistrate as good a Restraint as that of a God? Or will the Fears of a Secular Tribunal do as much to keep the World in peace, as Conscience? Surely it is not wisely done, when they grant a necessity of those Duties, that Religion puts upon us, to laugh those Terrors out of the Minds of Men,

Men, wherewith Religion perswades us; unless they can set up some-thing in its room, that is as sufficient to this purpose as Religion is. If there be any thing that can serve our turn as well, it must have the same power as Religion has, and be as unchangeable as it is, and take as severe a cognizance of us as that does.

But now nothing of this nature can be said of any Civil Government: For let them be never so well contrived and establish'd at the first, since they are in the hands of Men, Time and Humane Passions may corrupt them. And then, that Power which is design'd to be for the punishment of Evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well, may, on the contrary, countenance Vice, and discourage Vertue. Or if nothing of this nature happen, it may be too weak or too remiss; and either for want of power, or a due use of it, suffer such villainies and disorders as threaten Society with a dissolution. In either of these two cases the World would soon feel the want of Religion; and the Atheist himself, I doubt not, would begin to think it as needfull to the World, as he believes it requisite, that Justice and Honesty, Uprightness and Integrity should be maintain'd.

But let us go one step farther, and put the case that it be our good hap to live under a Government, that both can and will punish the Insolencies of Men; that has both power to correct the greatest Offenders, and is carefull to administer Justice; yet there are two Cases at least

in which the best Government of the World is not sufficient, without Religion, to secure us from wrong. The First is, when it is done with secrecy; and the Second is, when the punishment that is incurr'd is despised.

As to the First, it is plain that no Government can defend us from those Villanies, that it can take no cognizance of; nor can any humane Law punish a Crime, that it cannot discover. So that a Man may all the days of his life harbour an inveterate spight and malice in his Breast without fear: He may hatch and contrive what mischief he pleases in his own Heart; and if an opportunity to commit it with secrecy does offer it self, he may do it without any kind of reluctance or horror. And how little certainty should we then have either of our Lives or our Fortunes? It would never be safe for us to be alone, and our Lives would lie at the Mercy of every one we meet with, if he had but a prospect of some advantage, and a probability of making his escape.

And as to the Second Case, it is very visible our condition would be much worse. For it is impossible that the most rigorous Government should secure us from the wickedness of those desperate Men, who will not be awed by a Gallows, any more than they are by a Hell. If a Man be resolved that no Law shall restrain him from prosecuting his own advantage, and at the same time he accounts every thing just and lawfull that is for his interest; what Law or Proclamation

mation can protect us from the Villainies of such a Man: The utmost that the Magistrate can inflict, is Death; and if that be despised, what signifies his Power and Authority? And besides, it is much to be doubted, that this would be the general Temper of Mankind, if there really was no Religion; since we see that those wretched Miscreants, that have once learnt to despise a Judgment to come, do as easily overcome the fears of Death, and presently learn to contemn the penalties of humane Laws. So that Magistrates are beholding to that sense of Religion, that is upon the Minds of Men, that their Authority is at all revered, and their Laws regarded: And the Enmity of the Atheist thereto is much more mischievous than they are aware of. For they thereby make that Civil Power, which they would have supported, fruitless and ineffectual; and give that liberty to the Passions and Appetites of Men, which no Laws can restrain. And indeed,

3. It is not just or reasonable to attempt it. For put the case, that the Atheist was in the right; as soon as we are persuaded of this, we must alter our Opinions both concerning our own Nature, and the End we are to aim at, and the Means whereby we are to compass it. For then we must consider our selves onely as Beings that carry a mortal life about with us, and whose great End is to take care of our Bodies, and to make this present life as easie and gratefull to us as we can. This, I say, must needs be the great busi-

business and employment of our Lives, because there is nothing in this visible World but what has a respect to our Bodies, and is for the service of this life. And if this be all the End that we are to have in our view, the only use of that prudence and discretion that belongs to us, must be to find out the best and speediest ways for the serving our Aims. So that what-ever we shall judge a fit means for the bettering our present condition, and the raising our fortunes, will be a necessary Duty; and what-ever does any way thwart our Designs, or hinder us from attaining our End, must be a sin in us if we do it. And if this be so, we must likewise change the names of things, and call Vertue vice, and Vice vertue. For there is no doubt but Fraud and Falsehood, Cheating and Cozenage, Violence and Oppression, Wrong and Robbery, are very speedy and effectual means to get into an Estate, and to deliver our Bodies from pressure and want: And that honest Labour and Industry, Integrity and Uprightness, Truth and Faithfulness, do oftentimes hardly furnish the virtuous and good Man with the bare Necessaries of this life. So that we must account the doing Justice and loving Mercy, the walking Honestly, and speaking the Truth from our Hearts, to be the worst of Crimes; and that he who lives by these Rules, does make a very ill use of his Understanding. But that he who has the best knack at Cheating, and can with the best grace abuse an Oath, to persuade his Neighbour to believe a Lye, does nothing



thing but what becomes a virtuous and a wise Man. For since we must value the Means according to the Tendency they have to promote the End we aim at, we are mightily mistaken in the Nature of Things, if we think those slow-paced ways of thriving, which Justice and Honesty oblige us to take, are Virtues; or that those quicker ways of Theft and Robbery, and the like, are Vices; if all we have to do be to take care that our Bodies be well provided for; neither ought the practice of those things be made dangerous to us: For no Man ought to be discouraged from doing his Duty, nor run any hazard in prosecuting his true End by the best and most likely Means. So that all those Laws that restrain from the doing of those things, and make it Death either to Murder or Steal, when the satisfaction of our Appetites or Passions do dispose us to either, would be unjust, because they oblige us to sin against our selves, and suffer us not to do our selves that good, which we always ought to have in our Eye. Government then would be altogether useless as to those Ends for which the Atheist does suppose it to be necessary: Neither ought we to look upon it as a wise contrivance for the preserving our Rights, and securing to us the Benefits of Society; but to account it the most wicked invention that ever was, if it does not protect the doors of wrong and mischief, and punish those that complain of it. And this, one would think, the Atheist, when he quarrels with Religion, for  
laying



laying restraints upon our Appetites, aim'd at: For, according to his Principle, our Appetites ought to be allow'd their full swing; and whatever does any way give a check to them, ought to be condemned as much as he does Religion. So that the making the Gallows the reward of Theft, does deserve as severe a Censure, as he passes upon Religion for threatening it with Eternal flames. For this is to abridge us of our natural Liberty, which is as great a Cruelty in Government, as it can be pretended Unnatural in Religion. If then this Principle will permit of any Government at all, it must be, for the encouragement of Rage and Fury as the most manly Vertues, and the highest Madness and Extravagancies as the best Wisdom. It must be for the protecting and cherishing us, when we act most like Bears and Tygers, and the giving us the greater scope to prey upon and devour each other.

This would be the consequence of the want of Religion. And what a dreadfull Creature would Man be, if every thing should be a Duty which does conduce to the gratifying his Lusts; and a restraint from Perjury and Villainy, was to oblige him to sin against himself? And what a frightfull place should we have of this World, if Government was for the praise of Mischief and Violence, and the punishment of Goodness and Uprightness. We should have little reason either to wish for the Neighbourhood of our fellow Creature; or to rejoyce in being under the Au-

thority

thority of Laws. And if the want of Religion would have such direfull Effects, who can doubt whether it be fit and necessary, that the World should be under the restraints of it. The reasoning of the Atheist is certainly very unaccountable, when for the exploding Religion, he condemns it for the restraints it lays upon us; and yet for the preserving Society, is forced to acknowledge, that it is necessary our Liberty should be restrain'd. For, if it be fit that we be under restraints, why does he find fault with Religion upon that account? But if it be not, why is he a friend to Government? Either he is very rash in condemning Religion, or he has not well weigh'd the Nature of Humane Liberty, when he lays us under the Yoke of Humane Laws. For the same argument whereby he would set us at liberty from the one, ought to destroy the other. But if it be not fit, that we should have the liberty he contends for, it is highly reasonable that we should be under the restraints, that he is an enemy to, because they take the fastest hold upon us; and are the surest means to make Society usefull to, and Government to have its proper effect upon us. And this I shall more particularly endeavour to make appear,

4. By considering how well Religion does provide for the Well-being of the World. And none, I am confident, that knows either what it commands, or how powerfully it persuades, can make any doubt of its sufficiency to this purpose.

x. If

1. If we consider what it commands. For it favours every man's true Interest, secures every man's Right, and makes it penal to invade any man's Property. It is the best Patron and Protector of the Poor; for it preserves their Persons from contempt, and provides a good relief for their necessities. For it requires all Men to be kindly affectioned one to another, with Brotherly love, in Honour preferring one another; and not to mind high Things, but to condescend to Men of low Estate. It is the surest defence to every man's Estate, the best preservative of their Honours and Privileges, and is a much better guard to their Persons and Possessions, than all the weapons of defence they can make use of: For it takes care of their Honours, by requiring Inferiours to give honour to whom honour is due; and of their Fortunes, by obliging all Men to abstain from Violence and Wrong, and to live by Principles of Conscience and Integrity.

And there is this further to be said in the behalf of the Commands of Religion, That all Men do acknowledge the Reasonableness of them. Its very Enemies confess, that the Restraints it lays upon us, and the Duties it obliges us to, are for the good of Mankind, and necessary to the Well-being of the World. They know that Sobriety is more for the Health of the Body than Intemperance; and that Justice and Integrity conduce more to the preservation of Peace and Order in Societies, than Craft and Knavery.

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And however, they are not willing that we should practise these things as Religious Duties, yet they insist upon a necessity of practising them. The meaning of which is nothing less than this, They would not have us believe we are obliged in Conscience to do them, though they have all the reason of the World on their side: They would have us live as Religion directs, though they would not have us believe there is any. They do not think it reasonable that we should break its Commands, though they think it very reasonable we should pay no respect to it. So that with the same breath they both commend the observing the Duties thereof, and ridicule the belief of it. However, when they confess, That Conversation cannot be maintain'd without Uprightness and Simplicity, nor Society stand without Faith and Truth, nor Mankind be govern'd without a respect to Justice and Honesty; 'tis such a Concession as will easily persuade any Man to believe, that they have such a secret sense of the Truth and Reasonableness of Religion, and such an inward veneration for its Excellency, that nothing but their Lusts do hinder them from being its greatest Patrons.

But there is one thing farther in which the Excellency of the Commands of Religion does consist; and which, above all other things, does tend to preserve the World in a peaceable and flourishing condition. And that lies in its speaking to our Minds, and obliging us not to harbour

bour any ill thought, or indulge any extravagant humour, or yield to the motions of any violent passion. For by requiring us to lay aside all Malice and Guile, and Hypocrisies and Envy, not to give way to Anger and Wrath, or to suffer a revengefull Thought to live in our Hearts, it strikes at the root of that wickedness, that is veracious and troublesome to the World. And in this respect Religion is a much better foundation of Peace than the best Government in the World can possibly be. It builds our Peace and Happiness upon an honest Mind and a virtuous Disposition; whereas Humane Laws can take no cognizance of any thing that is within, nor lay any restraints upon the malice of an ill-disposed Mind. Upon which account the severest Proclamations and Edicts of the Civil Magistrate, without Religion, would be too weak to keep the World in order. For Men may be as malicious and spitefull, as envious and ill-natur'd as they please, in spite of any Civil Sanctions; and so long as these Passions are suffer'd to dwell quietly within us, they will be corrupting our Actions, and frequently compell us to let them loose to save our selves from their rage. But further,

2. Let us consider the Motives wherewith it persuades. For to such a perverseness is our Nature depraved, that unless we be awed and influenced by something that is very considerable, no Command can be sufficient to oblige us to do our Duty. This all Governments are a-

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ware of; and therefore those in Authority do not content themselves with prescribing Rules of Life; and telling us, That such and such Actions are not for the good of Society, or not convenient for our Interests, but enforce their Commands with Threats of punishment in case of disobedience. And when the Atheist does allow of the Reasonableness of these Restraints; he must grant, That the more powerfully we are Aw'd, the better it is for Society; and that he has no reason to quarrel with Religion for obliging us to do our Duty to one another, by setting Everlasting Considerations before us. For these are Motives, that he will acknowledge, we ought not to despise, till we are convinced, that they are false; which is an acknowledgment, that Religion does take the most effectual course to keep us within bounds, if the Considerations, it makes use of, be but true. For doubtless the Rewards and Punishments, it sets before us, are of much greater force to encourage Obedience, and discourage Disobedience, than those that the Civil Magistrate can make use of. The utmost punishment he can inflict is Death: But who will much stand in awe of that, when any considerable advantage tempts him, if there be nothing to be fear'd afterwards? Or what is there that is terrible in such a punishment to awe a desperate Mind? The pain is but short, and the shame is not like to follow him; and when this is put in the Scale with forty or fifty years pleasure, how easie is it to despise the one for the



other: But now let a Man believe that his shame and guilt will follow him into another World; where he is like to suffer among cursed Spirits for ever; and he has so much reason against a profligate life, as no Temporal consideration can out-weigh. This is so very plain, that the Atheist makes no exception to the power, that these Terrors have to persuade Men; but only to the Truth of them. And it is strange he should, when it is so visible that it is so much his and every man's Interest they should be true; and that it is not possible Man should be kept in awe without them.

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### C H A P. III.

*From the Desires of all Men, that there should be such a thing as Religion in the World.*

**N**Othing, I presume, can be more obvious than this Truth, That if all Mankind be desirous, that the Principles which Religion teaches, and the Duties it requires should be true, we have a great deal of reason to believe it is highly agreeable to our Nature. For why should all Men agree in such a desire, if there be not something in us, that tells us it is of extraordinary advantage to us, and that takes a secret pleasure and delight in it. Such a Universal De-



fire cannot be of the nature of those suddain Passions which owe their Birth to humour or fanſie, but must spring from some certain and fixed Reason, which it is impossible for us to withstand. Our Desires, 'tis true, are sometimes so unaccountable, that when we come to reflect upon them with seriousness, we see a great deal of reason to be ashamed of them. But a Desire, in which all Mankind agrees, can never be lookt upon as a hearty Transport, but must arise from the Reasonableness of the thing that is desired, and be the Effect of a Cause that has its foundation in our Nature.

Now that there is such a Desire, will easily be granted, if I can make good these Two things :

1. That we naturally desire all that is implied in the fundamental Principles of Religion.
2. All that Vertue that it teaches.

1. We naturally desire all that is implied in the fundamental Principles of Religion. We love and take pleasure to think of all the Perfections, that Religion teaches us, do belong to the Notion and Nature of a Deity, and are very desirous to find them some-where, that we may rest upon them: We are so extremely affected with Life, that we would never lose it, if we could possibly prevent such a loss; And since this is not possible, Nature startles at and abhors the

Thoughts of Death as its most formidable Enemy. And as it is an Immortal life we are desirous of, we would live such a Life as Religion describes, that which is to come, to be. Neither is this a fanisfull Wish of some particular Persons onely, but the natural Desire of all Mankind. It is not a Desire, that sticks to the Minds of such onely, as have been educated in the Principles of Religion, but which the most Profane and Atheistical person, as well as the most Religious, does allow to be reasonable. Though he would have us to believe, that he sees no reason to believe there is a God or a future state of Immortality and Glory; yet he is too great a friend to himself to think that Death is as desirable as Life, and Misery as gratefull as Happiness. Though he loves not to think there is a God, yet he cannot but wish that there was something that was as wise and powerfull, as good and compassionate as we believe God to be: And though he be an Enemy to the Notion of another life, yet he feels himself strongly inclined to approve of the Immortality, and to wish for as quiet and easie a life as belongs to that state. The truth on't is, he is no enemy to the Wisdom and Goodness that is in God, or to such uninterrupted Joys and Pleasures, and such lasting Enjoyments as Religion teaches us to look for hereafter; but he does not love to think, that there is a God, that is thus perfect; or to be put off to a future state, where we are taught, That Immortality and Life will be disposed of

as we qualifie our selves for them in this life. The Enmity then, that he bears to Religion, is not because he believes the Principles thereof to be unreasonable ; but, because he can find nothing in this World, that he loves and doats on so much, to contain all that Excellency and Good that Religion informs us of. For, was this World as glorious and happy a place as Heaven is represented to us to be ; or was there any thing, that he loves in it, as great and perfect as God is, he would have no quarrel at all with these things : But his great spight to Religion is, That when it acquaints him with things so desirable as Immortality and Life, the Wisdom and Goodness, and other Perfections of a Deity, it puts him upon a contempt of those Enjoyments, he loves here, for the better qualifying himself for those hereafter. But as to the Things themselves,

1. He is desirous, as well as other Men are, of a friend, who is every way qualified to be helpfull to him. As confident as he appears that there is no God, and as much sport as he makes himself with our belief, that there is, he, as much as any other Man, feels the imperfection of humane Nature, and a necessity of having a recourse to something without him for relief and refreshment. He thinks himself wise in disowning a God ; and yet he is sensible that no less Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness, than that which is in God, is sufficient to his happiness. And therefore he does not think it fit at

all times to rely upon the Abilities of his own Nature, as if he was an independant Being; but, like all other Men, is desirous of a friend, that will be kind and helpfull to him; A friend, that has Wisdom enough to know how to advise and direct him, and so to order his affairs, that he need not doubt of a good issue to them; That has power sufficient to relieve him, when he is press'd with any difficulties; and who, above all, has so much goodness and compassion in his Nature, as assures him of a favourable reception when-ever he makes his address to him. Now to desire such a friend, is to wish that there was a God, to govern and order all Events, and to preside over and be a ready help to us in all our Exigencies. So that let us suppose that this wise discoverer was really right in his belief concerning this Principle of Religion; yet when-ever he reflects upon his own Wants, he will not have much cause to rejoyce in his discovery; but every moment furnishes him with fresh Reasons to wish he was mistaken; and all the World will confess that he is much in the right, when he wishes for such a friend, as we believe God to be. For to wish for a friend, that is at all times able and willing to help us; for a friend, that has no changeableness, nor shadow of turning in his Temper; for a friend, that is faithfull and true, full of compassion and great pity, is to make it our hearty desire; that there was a God, and as heartily to bewail our want of him, if there be none. So that the Atheist, who joyns in this common Wish with all Man-kind,

kind, must believe that his Faith is not for his Interest, but that it will be much better for him if it be false. He must repent himself of his folly, in arguing himself out of the belief of an infinitely perfect Being; since such a Being is so very needfull to him, that he cannot but every moment be wishing for such a Being: And yet if he has argued rightly, if there be no God, it is his unhappiness that there is no such friend as he wants, and wishes for to be found. And now what has this Man got by the Wisdom of his Speculations? What great cause has he to triumph in having undeceived himself into so wretched a condition, that he wishes he was out of it? He has disputed himself out of the belief of a God; and yet so little can he do without one, that he seeks for and desires to find one some-where else, than where he is. He cannot live without an infinitely good and perfect Being, and yet he is not willing there should be such a Being in the World: And what is this, but to fly to the Principle he derides and scorns as the best support and onely comfort of his life.

Neither do his Wants and Imperfections alone force him to wish for such a friend as we believe God to be; but his Passions many times make him to desire he had a friend, that would not see him wrong'd, but that had both Power and Will to avenge him; A friend that would stand by him and do him right, when he can have Justice from no other hand. And what is this, but to wish there was a Being that had the Ju-

stice and Providence of a God? He would, it seems, have a God to himself at the same time that he endeavours to laugh all the World out of conceit of such a Being; A God to plague his Enemies with, though it is to his Passions he is more beholding for such a Desire, than, as he would have us believe, to any good reason he has for it.

2. He is desirous likewise of an Immortal life. Life is so fundamental a Blessing, that without it we are capable of none of the comforts and enjoyments of this World: *The grave, as the Psalmist styles it, is that land of darkness, where all things are forgotten. The dead know not any thing, saith the Wise-man, neither have they any more a reward, for the memory of them is forgotten, Eccles. 9. 5. Their love, and their hatred, and their envy is perished; i. e. They are neither capable of doing themselves or others either good or harm: Neither have they any more a portion in any thing that is done under the Sun, v. 6. i. e. All the Pleasures and Glories of this World are lost to them, neither is there any thing here that can rejoyce them. And therefore the Wise-man infers, That all the sensible delight, we are capable of, is to be enjoy'd here, and depends upon Life. Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, &c. What-ever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might: i. e. Make use of Time and Opportunity, while this Life lasts; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom*



*in the grave, whither thou goest, v. 10.* And who is he that is not wise enough to know the Truth of all this? Who is he, that is not sensible, that all bodily Delights do depend upon Life; and that Life is so great a Blessing, that we can hardly be too tender of it? Do we not all express so passionate a desire of living, and so much reluct to the Thoughts of dying, that we can hardly reconcile our selves to the Thoughts of it, when we see there is no avoiding it, and have all the reason in the World to be cloy'd with living? When we can no longer tast the pleasures of the World, and stoop under the burthen of Years, we are too apt to think it good for us to live still, and are for trying Remedies to put off Death till a further season. I know indeed that there have been a great many excellent Persons, that rather than deny their Faith, have laid down their Lives with a great deal of cheerfulness; and have rejoiced in their sufferings, when they have been haled before Tribunals, and dragg'd to a Stake. But this does not prove that Life is not a very valuable Blessing; but that to a Religious Man, the happiness of the Mind and Conscience is much greater; and that of the two, it is a much wiser thing to expose the Body to sufferings, rather than the Mind to vexation and misery. It shows that a good Man's hope is sufficient to quiet Nature, and to persuade it to submit patiently to a Dissolution; and that Religion does furnish us with such a bravery of Mind, as rather to chuse



to die with a good Conscience, than to live with a bad one.

But what is this to the case of the Atheist, who has no such reason to despise Death? And besides, it is not because Men are out of Charity with Life, that in any such case they so easily part with it; but it is a Hope and Desire to live a Life of Immortality, that prevails with them to set so little by this. And this Desire is as much in the Atheist as any Man, only he would have his Immortality here. He looks for nothing after Death; and therefore he has nothing before him to persuade him, it is good for him to die. He is under a more particular Obligation than any Man to be extremely tender of this life, because all that he has, or hopes for, lies in it. It is very easie for a Man that believes Death is a passage to a much better and more durable Life than this, to be willing to quit this; but it is the hardest thing in the World for an Atheist to do so; because there is no reason why he should; and no doubt but he who values himself so much for the goodness of his Reason, will yield us that it is a very hard thing for a Man to do or like of any thing without Reason.

The only thing, that the Atheist can comfort himself with, since he must die, is; That Death is a state of Annihilation; and that in the Grave, though he has for ever lost all the pleasures and comforts of Life, he shall be no more sensible of Evil than of Good. But this is no

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other than the sorry comfort of a discontented Man, who, to ease his Mind, betakes himself to any weak support, when he can no longer keep the valuable thing, that he is not willing to part with. For when a Man has lost all that he has, will he thank his friend for the comfort he gives him, by telling him, that now he is as low as he can be; and that though he has not the advantages of his former better condition, yet he cannot be in a worse than he is? This is his trouble and affliction: And so it must be to the Atheist likewise to know, that he cannot for ever enjoy the Life that he takes so much pleasure in. For suppose it true, that he shall at last be reduced to a state, in which he shall neither feel good nor evil, what comfort can that be to him, when he knows he must lose all the Good he now delights in? There is no question, but were Life and Death at his choice, and in his power, he would much rather chuse to live on, and be what he is, than to die and be nothing at all. And since he values Immortality as so desirable a Blessing, does he not make a tacit confession that Religion is too agreeable to our Nature to be false. But,

3. He not onely desires to live, but he desires a Life perfectly free from trouble and vexation. The pleasures he loves are not, 'tis true, of the same nature with those in Heaven, which Religion teaches us to aspire after; but he is desirous they should be as lasting and as little interrupted, as full of satisfaction, and have as little  
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Evil mingled with them, as those have. Though he considers himself onely as a sensitive Creature, and goes no further for his Happiness than the Objects this World sets before him; yet he loves his Body as well as Religion teaches us to do our Souls, and would enjoy all bodily Pleasures in as high a perfection, as Religion informs us holy Souls do those that are Spiritual.

What-ever is apt to put the Body into a painful, uneasie condition, is, in the opinion of all the World, an Affliction and Calamity. No Man doubts but it is a great Blessing to be capable of seeing the Glories, and tasting the sweet, and feeling the good that is lodged in this sensible World. But if by having such bodily Powers we did taste nothing, but what is bitter and unfavoury, nor see any thing but what is troublesome and vexatious, nor hear any thing but what is ungratefull and harsh, we should not much rejoyce in our privilege. 'Tis this consideration for the Body is the reason, that the Atheist is fallen out with Religion: For he pretends that it is an enemy to our happiness, and suffers us not to enjoy our selves with that freedom, as otherwise we might: That it lays severe restraints upon us, and makes self-denial a necessary Vertue: That in some cases it obliges us to quit our Enjoyments, to vex our Bodies with severe Mortifications, and to undergo with patience Pains and Torments. Now although this be true, and the Atheist makes use of it as a very considerable prejudice against Religion; yet it is

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very much for the reputation and advantage of Religion, that he undertakes to prove thereby, That Mankind cannot be satisfied with a less degree of Happiness than what Religion sets before us. For he plainly intimates, that he would have the Body suffer no kind of pain, nor be denied any thing that is good and gratefull to our Senses; That he would enjoy the pleasures of this life with as much freedom, and as much untainted as those the good Man looks for hereafter. And to this purpose he takes care to improve his Pleasures, and to make all his Enjoyments as poyntant and delicious as possibly he can. And now what is it that this Man does quarrel at Religion for? Upon what reason does he report it to be an invention, and persuade himself, that its Principles are laid in our Minds by Art and Education, when he is so great a friend to, and so desirous of them? He has nothing to except against a Being that is absolutely perfect, for 'tis such a friend that he desires: He has no quarrel with an Immortal life, for 'tis such a life as he would live; nor does he find fault with Joys and Pleasures, that have nothing to sully and interrupt them; for he is sensible that no less delights do deserve the name of Happiness. All the difference then between him and Religion lies in this; That it deferrs our hopes of such enjoyments, and such a life to another state, and he would have them now. But since he finds it impossible we should have them here, he has infinite reason to think well of Religion, because  
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it takes care to satisfy his desires at the last, if he will but depend upon it. If his desires of these things be reasonable, he has little reason to believe Religion to be so unreasonable an imposition, as he complains it is. And although he is not reconciled to the Notion of spiritual Delights, yet he ought. For the reason why he laughs at them, is, because he believes he has nothing but a Body to please. And it is certain, that if he be right in his Faith, he is not mistaken when he makes this World his onely place of pleasure and delight. But how then comes he to desire such a degree of Happiness, as is not to be had here below? Whence is it that he cannot content himself with the sensible pleasures of this life, such as he finds them? For no bodily Delights are pure and unallay'd, uninterrupted and endless; and if these be the onely Delights we are capable of, how comes it we are capable of wishing for better? If his Desires be reasonable, he has as much reason to desire and value the spiritual Enjoyments of another life, as to desire such Joys as are endless. For, since nothing in this World can satisfy such a Desire, he must either look upon himself to be very ill framed for any kind of Happiness at all, or he must look beyond this life for pleasures as endless, and full as the desires. And since the nature of his Desires do necessarily lead him thither at the last, he ought not to despise the notion of spiritual Enjoyments, since there are no other there. I come,

1. To consider how all that Vertue, which Religion teaches us, is likewise the Matter of every Man's desire. 'Tis every Man's desire, that Truth and Faithfulness, Justice and Honesty, Uprightness and Integrity were Universally practis'd in the World. The Violence of humane Passions, the unruliness of Humour, and the extravagancies of our Appetites are so troublesome to the World; And all kind of Immoralities are attended with such bad effects, that there is none but wishes that they were utterly extirpated, and the contrary Vertues establish'd. For who is there, that would not gladly dwell in safety, and peaceably enjoy the fruits of his labour? Who would not live free from vexation and trouble, and pass his life with as little disquiet and disturbance as possible. Go to the Man, that makes the least account of Religion; and who, when a fair opportunity invites him to raise himself and his fortune, by invading the Rights of another, is not willing to lose the advantage, who reckons Craft and Dissimulation a necessary Prudence, and Injustice and Oppression lawfull Methods of compassing his Aims: Enquire, I say, of this Man, who seems so little a friend to the slow-paced Vertues of Justice and Integrity, whether he would be content, that all Men should make as little account of them as he does; and whether he would be willing to live by a Neighbour, that makes use of the same base Arts; or chuse rather to have dealings with those, that make Conscience of their doings: And even this Man, I doubt



doubt not, will then declare in favour of these sociable and good-natur'd Vertues; and wish with all his heart, that every-body else would abhor the wickedness, that he thrives by, and at least for his own quiet and security desire, that he may never meet with one, that has more ways to over-reach than he is aware of. If he loves Oppression and Knavery, it is onely in himself, but in no-body else; it is for the gain he makes by them, not for the reasonableness of such actions: And therefore if ever he suffers by them, he censures and condemns them as severely as any-body else. So that although he bears no respect to Religion himself, yet he does not desire to see the Principles, he lives by, universally establish'd, but would have all Men to be true and just in their dealings, and kind and courteous in their deportment and conversation with him; *i. e.* He would have every Man restrain'd by Religion from doing him wrong, and his Person and Estate secured from the mischief of his own Villainies. And if we were to go through the World, we shall find all Men of the same mind, condemning the Vices that Religion prohibits; and desirous that there was more Vertue and Goodness, more just and honest dealings among Men than there is, in those frequent complaints of that little Conscience and Integrity they meet with, and those sorrowfull stories they tell, how much they have been over-reach'd and cozen'd, how much wrong has been done them, and how many abuses and affronts have been put upon



upon them. For there is no Man, that feels these things, but he feels the want of Religion; and when we complain of the vexation they give us, we express a desire, that the Duties of Religion were more Universally practis'd.

There is indeed one part of Religion, that seems to be very little in the desires of Men; but the contrary to be most countenanced and affected with the greatest passion: And that consists generally in the Duties, that have a respect to our selves. And of this nature chiefly is the virtue of Temperance. For, because the intemperate Man hurts no-body but himself, few concern themselves to wish he was more sober; and they who delight in this Vice seem very desirous to propagate it. But yet it is not altogether true, that Religion in this respect is not much rather wish'd for than the Vice, that is contrary to it. For Temperance has those Excellencies in it, and is attended with those advantages as render it too amiable and desirable to be despis'd: It keeps us to such a measure of Eating and Drinking, with which Nature is contented: And since the onely End of Eating and Drinking is for the support of Nature, and the maintaining the health and vigour of our Bodies, it must belong to Nature to set its own Bounds, and to tell us what is sufficient for these Ends. But when we transgress the bounds of Nature, and eat and drink not onely that we may live, but that we may please a luxurious Appetite, instead of supporting Nature, we weaken and destroy it, and make those very re-

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freshments,

freshments, by which we are to live, to be the occasion of Diseases and Death. Such a use of Meat and Drink tires and over-charges Nature, so that it is never at rest till it some way or other gets rid of its burden; which if it cannot do, the Man languishes and droops under the Wastings of an unconquerable Surfeit. And these are such loathsome and mischievous consequences, as oftentimes make the intemperate Man, as much pleasure as he takes in his Excesses, to abhor his Debauch, and to wish his Companions were more sober.

And now, if to fear God and keep his Commandments be so agreeable to the Minds of Men; If it be so desirable a thing to all sorts of persons to believe there is a Being that deserves our firmest Trust and Confidence, our greatest Love and Reverence, and to have Faith and Truth, Love and Good-nature, Sincerity and Justice maintain'd; in a word, if it be hard to find a Man, that does not at one time or other wish that all the Verrues of Religion were more in Reputation, who can think, that That which is so desirable to all Men, has not a real Foundation in our Nature.

CHAP.

## C H A P. IV.

*From the Universal Sense of Mankind, that there is a vast difference between Virtue and Vice.*

IT is not onely a desirable thing to Mankind, that there should be such a thing as Religion; but all Men do agree in no one thing more than this, That there is. What is it that all Nations of Men, how much soever they differ in their Customs and Manners, do more universally acknowledge than this Truth, That there is an absolutely perfect Being, to whom our highest Veneration and most solemn Adorations are due? Let us go where we will, we shall find, that though there be mistakes in Men's apprehensions concerning the Nature of God, and different persuasions concerning the God that ought to be worship'd; yet there is no difference of opinion, whether there be a God whom all Men ought to worship. Neither has this Persuasion been propagated by Time, and a mutual intercourse among Men; for no Time can be instanced in, when Men did as Universally agree, that there is no God, as now they do, that there is one: And those Nations, that have been unknown to all the Ages of the World till of late, were, upon their discovery, found to be as zealous Assertors of this Principle, as those who

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have

have had opportunities of Commerce with each other.

And besides, there is as general a consent too concerning the Differences between Vertue and Vice: That those Actions which we call vertuous, are comely and gracefull; and that there is such a natural Deformity and baseness in Vice, as is disturbing to Humane Nature, and vexatious to the Minds and Consciences of Men. Let us traverse the whole World, we shall find no sort of People in any corner thereof, but do own, that there are some sort of Actions not to be tolerated among Men, and others that deserve to be encouraged and supported. There is neither *Jew* nor *Gentile*, *Turk* nor *Christian*; no sort of Men, I say, how distant soever from each other in Religion, but do all agree in this, That it is by Justice, and Righteousness, by Faith and Truth, and the like Vertues, that the World stands, and that the Vices, that are contrary thereto, do shake the very foundations of the Earth. And therefore go where you will, you will find no People so rude and destitute of Knowledge, but you will find some kind of Laws for the suppressing Vice, and the maintaining Vertue; and very great care used to punish Evil-doers, and to encourage those that do well. All Nations are not, 'tis true, equally Cultivated and Civilized; but yet that there are some so barbarous as to live upon Spoil and Rapine, Theft and Robbery, is rather owing to the ill-ness of their Religion than their Belief, that there

is none. But yet although there are some sort of people, that are generally addicted to some particular Vices, and that by publickly tolerating them, do seem to have no sense of the illness of them; yet there are none that have so totally lost all sense of the differences between Vertue and Vice, as to allow of the rage of every Passion, and to show no kind of respect to any one Vertue. And besides, it is very obvious, that they who allow of such barbarous Customs among themselves, have some secret Apprehensions of the illness of them; because they are for revenging it as a wrong, when their own Houses are plunder'd, and their Territories invaded. Though they allow of these Vices in themselves, yet they do believe them so great Wickednesses in others, as to be reason enough why they ought not to live. And now why should they be such Enemies to their own Customs, as by Fire and Sword to endeavour the exterminating them? Why should they believe them not fit to be tolerated among their Neighbours? If they believe them to be generous and noble Actions, why are they provoked and exasperated by them, and contribute their endeavours to prevent their spreading through the World? Surely it is not much for the reputation of these Actions, that those, that favour them most, cannot brook them. Now whence is it, that Mankind should generally agree to set a mark of disgrace and infamy upon some kind of Actions, and bear witness to the Excellency and Usefulness of others;

that some should be reſented, and others favour'd by us ; that ſome ſhould be proſecuted, and others encouraged ; and Men ſhould be accounted either good or bad Neighbours, according as they praſtiſe either the one or the other, if there was no difference at all between them, and Humane Nature was no more framed for the one than the other ?

Thoſe, I know, who would have all Men think as lightly of Religion, as they do, tell us, That the difference that is between Vertue and Vice, does not lie in the Nature of them, or the agreeableneſs that the one has to our Nature more than the other ; but does ariſe from the Laws of Men, that forbid and make it unjuſt and penal to do the one, and encourage the praſtice of the other. That Man, conſider'd in his natural ſtate, is no more obliged to do Juſtice, or love Mercy, than to be cruel and oppreſſive ; but that theſe and all other Laws of right Reaſon do obtain the force of Laws, by being commanded by thoſe that have the power of Dominion in their hands.

Now to this I reply, 1. That this Principle over-throws the Divine Authority, and leaves it to our own choice, or the Will of the Civil Magiſtrate, whether he ſhall have any Rule or Dominion over us. For if it be true, that we are under no Obligation to obſerve the Dictates of our own Conſciences, or the Commands of our Reaſon, any more than the Laws of our ſenſual Appetites, till the one is declared pious and holy,  
and



and the other impious, by the Decrees of the Civil Magistrate; all the reason then that we have to fear Almighty Power, and love infinite Goodness, and to obey the highest Authority in the World, must be, because the Laws of our Country have declared it is good and reasonable to do so. This wicked Doctrine is expressly taught in a very bad Book, where we are told, that Religion, whether natural or revealed, is of no force till we think good to receive it, or it be establish'd by the Civil Authority. And accordingly that the Religion, that God gave the *Jews*, did not oblige them, till by a common consent they had determin'd to obey it; or rather, till by transferring their natural Right to every thing upon *Moses*, they gave him a power to oblige them to worship the God, that had deliver'd them. This is so vile a Doctrine, that one would think the very naming it should be enough to expose it. For if the case be thus as to Religion; what is it then, that we must fear, or love; believe, or obey; if not that Power, that can do us the most hurt; or that Goodness, that can do us the most good; or that Truth, which is the most infallibly certain; or that Authority, which is the most sovereign? Why are these Affections planted in our Nature, if Nature must not tell us what use we are to make of 'em, till we have the Command of the Civil Magistrate. And further, if this be true, the *Jews* were not bound to believe the Religion God had

*Tract. Theol.*  
*Polit.* 215,  
216.

given, and the Truths he had reveal'd to them, to have any Excellency or Truth in them, when they lived under the Authority of such Princes as were Enemies to them; neither had God any reason to blame them for revolting from him, when they worship'd *Jeroboam's* Calves, or *Ma-  
nasses's* Idols. And when they were in *Babylon*, the three Children were guilty of a great Wick-  
edness in disobeying *Nebuchadnezzar's* Command, to worship his Golden Image; and *Daniel* was justly thrown to the Lions for asserting the Au-  
thority of the God of *Israel* against the express Command of *Darius*: For both he and all the *Jews* were then bound to believe, that the God, whom they and their Fathers had worship'd in their own Land, had lost his Authority over them, since they were carried into a strange Land; and that they were under the strictest ties to think as meanly of him as their Enemies would have them. And indeed, if that Sense of Religion, that is among Men, does owe it self to the Edicts of Princes, we cannot be under an Obligation always to believe, that to be an in-  
fallible Truth, which now we are bound to be-  
lieve is so; neither can we say, that we are for ever bound to Honour and Love the God whom we now Reverence and Adore; nor to pay a perpetual respect to those Revelations which now we must confess are Divine. For a *Christian* among the *Turks*, must be lookt on as an impi-  
ous Person, if he don't believe according to the Laws of the *Alchoran*. And none can tell but it

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may become a necessary Duty to condemn and blaspheme the God whom he now Adores.

Neither is this the worst consequence of this Principle. For if God be beholding to the Laws of Magistrates for the Fear and Reverence, that Men bear him, there is no certain reason, why we ought to Fear and Reverence him at all: For if he hath not that Power and Goodness, which are apt to move these Affections, no Civil Sanction can give him them. And besides, no Humane Law can take any cognizance whether we have such a regard to a Deity or no. They can only punish an open Contempt, but they cannot reach our Minds; nor lay a secret Awe and Dread of a Being there, that has nothing either lovely or great in himself, to be the Foundation of it. So that the Abettors of this Principle must either deny, that there is any Fear of a Deity among Men; or they must acknowledge, that it springs from a higher Cause than a Humane Authority. But,

2. I shall more particularly consider that insufficiency of this Principle to render the Universal Sense of Religion that is among Men, accountable. And in order to this, we are to observe, that it supposes these two Things:

1. That Humane Nature is so framed, as to be no more disposed to Vertue than to Vice.
2. That the greater disposition to Vertue, that is among Men, is owing to the Laws of Civil States.

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1. It supposes Humane Nature to be so framed, as to be no more disposed to Vertue than to Vice. This is very necessary for them to maintain, who resolve the Sense we have of the Excellency of Vertue, into Humane Laws. But by asserting this, they,

First, Destroy that Liberty which they design to establish by it.

Secondly, It renders it impossible that any Law should ever have been made for the obliging us to a greater and more venerable Esteem for Vertue than Vice.

1. They hereby destroy that Liberty, which they design to establish. The Liberty, I mean, of obeying either the Commands of Reason, or of our bodily Appetites, as we please. They suppose that we are at liberty to obey either the one or the other; and that if we suffer our Appetites to bear Rule in us, we are not guilty of any fault, because our Nature does not determine us to the Obedience of Reason, rather than our Appetites: But that since both have an equal Power and Authority over us, it is at our own choice which we will obey. Now if this be true, it must be granted, That the greater regard we have to Vertue than Vice, cannot derive it self from the Frame of our Nature. But it is as true too, that we cannot have such a Liberty as this Principle is designed to support: For if the Authority of Reason and our Appetites

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tites be equal, we ought not to favour the one more than the other; because there is nothing more on the one side than the other to determine us to yield to the Authority of the one more than the other. If Reason have as much Authority to command us as our Appetites, we cannot incline towards our Appetites more than our Reason, but to the great prejudice of that Authority, that belongs to our Reason. For he that upon this reason, because their Authority is equal, takes the liberty to obey his Appetites, is unjust to his Reason, by giving a greater Authority to his Appetites, than according to the Frame of our Nature they ought to have.

2. It renders it impossible that any Law should ever have been made for the obliging us to a greater and more venerable Esteem for Virtue than for Vice. For before such a Law could be made, it must be debated which of these two Authorities, it was most fit, that Man should be under the Government of; whether it was best for him to obey the Laws of his Mind, or those of his Members; whether the Dictates of Reason, or the Commands of the Appetites, should be Authorized.

But how was it ever possible that any Man should thus debate this case, if both these Powers were equal? The Power of the Appetite would be of as much force to withstand the Commands of Reason, as Reason to enact against the Power of the Appetite. There could be no inclination to favour the Laws of Reason, because the Appetite

petite has as much power to oppose its Interests, as it has to establish them; neither could the Appetite prevail to the enforcing its Laws, because Reason has an equal Power to withstand them. If Reason and the Appetite have an equal Power to command us, neither can possibly command the other; but Man must have suspended his choice for ever, which of the two he would have suffer'd to bear Rule in him. If both had an equal Right to rule, both had likewise an equal Power to maintain their Authority; and the Appetite would no more suffer us to incline to Reason, than Reason to the Appetite. The Reason for our obeying both being equal, there was no over-ruling Reason to bring us over to the Authority of Reason. So then, though Humane Laws do assert the Differences of Vertue and Vice, and do favour the former in opposition to the latter; yet it is not from these Laws, that we learn to know what is just and what is unjust, but from those natural Differences, that are in the things themselves. For those Laws that establish the Dictates of Reason, and do oblige us to the Practice of Justice and Charity, and the like Vertues, do suppose that there was more reason for the commanding these things than the contrary, and consequently, that the Appetite has not an equal Right to rule us; but that the Authority we ought to submit to, does lie on the side of Reason. Such Laws being made it must be granted, that that Reason which enacted them found it had a greater Power and Authority in us, than

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the Appetites which are restrained can pretend to. And if this be so, then it is not owing to the Authority of the Law, but that greater Power of Reason which over-rules our Appetites; that we pay a greater respect to Vertue than Vice. For unless Reason has a right to consult what is best for us, no Law could inform us, what was so: And unless there was more reason to oblige us to obey the Dictates of Reason, than the Commands of our Appetites, those whom this Principle gives the Power of determining what is just and right, and what is not, could have no reason to determine the matter either way, or to come to a resolution, which ought to bear sway in us.

2. I come now to consider the second thing supposed in this Principle, viz. That the greater disposition to Vertue, that is among Men, is owing to the Laws of Civil States. Now although it must be granted, that Humane Laws are a very great support to Vertue, yet it is so far from being true, that they laid the first Disposition thereto in our Minds, that they can beget no Disposition at all, if it be with humane Nature as the great sticklers for this Principle teach. They may contribute to the recovery of a lost or decayed Disposition, but they can no more dispose us to that, which we never were disposed to, than they can make Humane Nature to be, what it never was. The Improvement of Nature is by restoring it to its first and primitive State; and

to go any further, is not to correct, but to make it another thing to what it was: And if according, to the first Frame of our Nature, Vertue and Vice was equally good to us, it can never be improved to any higher pitch, in case of corruption, but to that equality of Power, that in our natural State belongs to Reason and our Appetites. But that the greater disposition to Vertue than Vice, or that quick sense of the Excellency of the one, and the deformity of the other that is in us, is not owing to the Authority of Humane Laws, I shall endeavour to make appear in three Things.

1. That, according to this Principle, we are under as great an Obligation to believe Truth to be Falshood, and Vertue to be Vice, if they were so declared by those in Authority, as we are now to believe the contrary. If it be the Civil Magistrate, that must inform us, what is just and right, and it be no Crime to cheat and steal, to murder or do any kind of Mischief, that our Appetites dispose us to, in case there was no Magistrate to restrain us, we must believe the most wicked thing, that can be done, to be just and lawfull, and a necessary Vertue, if it was commanded. This is a necessary Consequence from this Principle, which makes Humane Laws, not onely to be the sole Rule of Vertue, but the Determiner of the Differences between Vertue and Vice. For if Vertue be Vertue upon no other reason, but because the Civil Magistrate does give Authority to Reason;

Reason, Vice would be Vertue if he should give Authority to our Appetites.

2. It gives no account how it comes to pass, that all succeeding Generations of Men do retain the same Sense of the Goodness of Vertue, and the baseness of Vice, as their Forefathers had. For if Reason has no preference over our Appetites in Nature, it must be at the Choice of every Person, that is born; whether Reason or his bodily Appetites shall rule him. I mean, he is not bound to receive those Laws, by which his Fore-fathers have declared the Commands of Reason to be just; but it must be at his own choice (if it be allowed that he has a Power to determine himself to which he pleases) whether they shall be Laws to him or no; and consequently, whether that shall be just to him, which was to them. For if, as the broachers of this leud Doctrine tell us, it be true, that Humane Laws have their force onely from hence; that Men are contented to part with their natural Right, and to leave it to the discretion of their Governours to declare, whether they shall be bound to live, as Reason directs, or no; such Laws can onely oblige those, that thus part with their natural Right. For if the natural state of every Man be the same, how can our Fore-father's Act oblige us, or what we do be binding to our Posterity? And if what was done a great while ago by our Ancestors, when they consented, that Reason should be the ruling Principle in us, do not bind us, the Laws, that made it a wickedness in them

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to live otherwise than according to Reason, cannot make it so in us. And if this be true, as certainly it is, it leaves Vertue, and Government, and all that is justly accounted Sacred among Men, so much at the Mercy of every Generation, that we have good reason to look upon it as a very wonderfull thing, that in every Age there should be the same sense about these things among Men: That though one Generation goes, and another comes, there should never yet come one, that should think fit as generally to set up the Interests and Authority of our Appetites, as we are told our Fore-fathers have done, that of Reason; but that Religion and Vertue should still continue to have the Universal esteem and regard of all Men.

3. It gives no account how there should be an Universal agreement among Men, rather to establish the Dictates of Reason, than of our Appetites. For if our Appetites have as much right to govern us as our Reason, how comes it to pass that all Nations should rather make it a Wickedness to be led by our Appetites than our Reason? And this is the more strange, because we generally find we are more prone to humour our bodily Appetites, than obey our Reason: That though the Commands of our Reason be seconded by those of Religion, and supported by Humane Laws, yet it is a great difficulty to tame our Appetites, and to make them governable. And if the Authority of Reason does depend upon nothing more than the Sanctions of the

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Magistrate, what account can be given of the making of those Laws, which are so much against the Interests of our Appetites? And how came Reason to be preferr'd before, and advanced above our Appetites, when they had much the advantage of it to prevail with us to favour them? Why should that be chosen to be the ruling Principle in us, which we seem to have the least liking to, if there be no prevailing Reason in the Nature of the thing, that determin'd the choice this way? If there be no intrinsic Excellency in Vertue, nor no natural illness and deformity in Vice, how come the several States and Governments, that are in the World, to agree generally to beat down the reputation of Vice, and to recommend the Practice of the other? If there be nothing in us that does naturally abhor Acts of Impiety and Villainy, and that looks upon all kinds of Wickedness to be shamefull and disturbing to the World, why are all the Laws of the World made more for the crushing of these, than Actions of another nature? Why are not Men forbid to do Justice, and to love Mercy, to be kind and charitable, to be true and faithfull, as well as they are to be false and dishonest, oppressive and injurious, if Humane Nature be no more an Enemy to the one than the other? Is it not obvious from hence, that there is not onely an Universal agreement among Men concerning the difference between Vertue and Vice, but that this agreement does spring from the very Nature of these things themselves?

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And besides, I shall add this, That there are things that the severest Enemies of Religion cannot deny.

1. They cannot deny but that the general sense of Mankind does lie against them. They never go about to prove, That the World was ever of another Opinion; or that the greatest part of Mankind did ever speak as much in favour of Vice, as now they do of Vertue; and did maintain, That there was as much Reputation and Honour to be got by doing wickedly, as by living according to the Rules of Religion. They do not pretend to show, that ever Vice was supported by a Law as Vertue is, and Men were encouraged for the raising their Names, or establishing a firm and lasting Peace in the World to let loose the reins of their Passions, and to do all the mischief and villainy in the World. No, instead of this, they content themselves with the reports of two or three barbarous People, that have few Laws, and no Religion among them. Which is an Argument onely, that Humane Nature is capable of a sad corruption; but not that it ever was so Universally depraved, as to leave no sense of Religion among Men; or that all the World did ever live as those of *Soldania* are said to do. Would they prove any thing to the purpose, they ought to try if they can discover such an Age, wherein all, or the greatest part of Mankind, did make it a crime to fear God, or set as ill a character upon Vertue, as now it does upon Vice. But this is a task they



do not so much as offer at : And they know too well, that, though Religion has been attacked by Enemies, that have been inquisitive enough, yet it could never be made appear that Vice and Wickedness were ever in as great esteem, and judged as usefull to the World, as Vertue is; and that it was every whit as gracefull a thing to be intemperate and wanton, as to be sober and chaste; and as much for a Man's reputation to do violence and wrong, as to be kind and good-natur'd. And whereas they would persuade us, that this great Esteem of Vertue is owing to the positive Laws of Kingdoms; this proves still, that all the World is against them; and that it is the common Opinion of Mankind, that there should be some bounds set to the Appetites and Passions of Men.

2. It is as plain too, That the reason, why all Men do agree, that there should be such bounds set us, is because onely vertuous Actions do become us, and that all kind of Vice is unworthy of us. It is not true that the Laws of Kingdoms and States have made Justice and Righteousness, Truth and Faithfulness, to be good and commendable things; or that by prohibiting Fraud and Cozenage, Oppression and Violence, and the like Vices, they have set an ill character upon them. But, I am very confident, that they who argue thus, are not satisfied of the Truth of what they say; but that they are sensible there is so much loveliness in Religion, and mischief in Vice; that if there were no Laws to cherish the

one, and restrain the other, they would soon with there were. Vertue then is not good, because Humane Laws make it so; but Laws are made to enforce the practice of it, because it is good. So that the reason of those Laws, which oblige us to do Justice, and walk honestly, and which punish Craft and Knavery, is, Because the Reason of Mankind is satisfied of the necessity of the former, and is against the latter. It is, because Acts of Mercy and Goodness, and a strict observance of the Rules of Righteousness, have a natural tendency to promote the peace of the World, to beget mutual Love and Confidence among Men, and to make Society serviceable to our Interests: It is, because they approve themselves to the Minds and Consciences of Men; and the contrary Practices appear loathsome and shamefull, and upon no account fit to be born with. For let us suppose that there was no such thing as a Humane Law or Government in the World to forbid the doing ill, or to punish those that do so; would all Men, when they were left to this liberty, alter their Judgments concerning the Nature of Good and Evil? Should we all begin to commend Intemperance and Injustice, as highly as we now do Justice and Temperance? Would our own Reasons find nothing to blame us for, when for the satisfying a Passion we murder and burn, and do all the mischief we possibly can, to any that have offended us? Or if for the gratifying an Appetite, we give our selves to the committing of Spoil and Havock,

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Havock, to Cheat and Cozen, and to Plunder and Steal? Or would our Consciences bear no good Testimony to, or take no pleasure in our Actions, when we keep our selves within the bounds of Reason and Vertue, and scorn to do an ill thing, though we were sure there was no Law to punish us for it?

No, were there no Law to forbid us to do an ill action; yet Wickedness would be hatefull, and the World would see good reason to wish it were forbidden. Whether there were any Humane Law to bind us to the practice of Vertue, or to make it dangerous to commit a Villainy or no, yet the Natures of these things would be the same; *i.e.* Vice would be odious and loathsome, and Vertue the same gratefull thing to our Minds, and the same Ornament to our Heads, as it is: We should still bear about us the same Reason, upon which all Humane Laws are founded, and be sensible that we ought to be a Law to our selves.

And therefore the Wise-man always represents Vertue as comely in its own Nature, and Vice as a monstrous deformed thing: And lays the reason of our practising the one in its native Beauty and Excellency, and of our avoiding the other in its Ugliness and Baseness. For thus he speaks of Religion: *She will give to thine head an ornament of grace; and a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee,* Prov. 4. 9. And of Vice, *That it is loathsome, and bringeth to shame,* Prov.

And thus have the Wise Heathens discours'd of these things. Thus *Hierocles* makes Vice a Deviation from right Reason: Upon which account he requires us to have a great care to inform ourselves of the decency of things, and to be sure to moderate and restrain those Faculties that are void of Reason, that they may be under the Command of Reason. So little did he think that our Appetites have as good a Right to govern us as our Reason. And so vastly different does he make Vertue and Vice to be, that he styles a Life of Vertue truly Divine; but that which is Vicious, bestial. And to prove that all Men are sensible, that there is such a thing as right Reason, and do own the natural Turpitude of Wickedness; he observes that the unjust Man does judge according to the Rules of Justice in those Matters that do not concern himself; and the intemperate Man, temperately; and every wicked Man determines well, when he is not influenced by any Temptation, or byass'd by a regard to his own Lusts. And *Tully* likewise observes the same thing; when he saith, *That that which is decent and honest, does naturally please us, and has a strange power to affect the Minds of all Men: So that we cannot but love, and have an inward Esteem for those persons that are Eminent for Vertue.* This is certainly the case as to all ill Men, who, as little favour as they have for Religion, do yet frequently commend the Vertues they want, and condemn

condemn their own Vices in other Men. So that it is plain, that Religion has the Testimony and good Opinion of all Men: And when they who are most averse to the practice of it, do in innumerable cases judge of things according to its Rules, and the Dictates of right Reason; when they, I say, express such an inward Sense of its Excellency, that they cannot but acknowledge the indecency of their own Vices, when they see them in other Men; who can believe but that it has its Foundation in our very Nature?

## CHAP. V.

*From those Hopes and Fears, that possess Men upon their doing well or ill.*

THE last Argument I shall make use of, for the proving Religion to be a thing, that our Nature teaches us, is, Because Men that do well, do naturally hope for some good from their Actions; and, on the contrary, they that do ill, are as naturally afraid of some ill consequences.

1. From the hopes of good Men, upon the account of the goodness of their Actions, we have reason to believe, there is a very great agreeableness of Religion to our Minds. Such is the gratefulness of a virtuous Conversation to our Minds; Such is the acquiescence and pleasure,

that arises from Acts of Piety and Humanity, as discovers that we live according to the truest instincts of our Nature, when we reverence the Deity, and are just and charitable to Men. *A good Man shall be satisfied from himself*, saith the *Wise-man*, Prov. 14. 14. *i. e.* The goodness of his Actions shall fill his Soul with joy and comfort, and afford him the truest pleasure and most solid contentment.

And hence it is that he lives in a continued expectation of nothing but Good here, and leaves the World with a good Hope of a glorious Reward hereafter. *The hope of the Righteous is gladness*, saith the *Wise-man*, Prov. 10. 28. He is not onely full of comfort upon the account of the Hope that is in him, but that which he hopes for from the Nature of his Actions, is such an acceptableness both with God and Man, as is matter of great satisfaction to him. The fruit, that he expects from his labour, is Quietness and Assurance, Peace and Joy, because he knows his Actions are such as cannot justly create him any Enemies; and which, he knows, God can no more be displeased with, than he can hate his own Perfections. But with a great deal of reason he looks for the favour and good-will of Men, toward whom he behaves himself according to the most obliging Principles. He expects that all Men should know their own Interests so well, as not to be displeased with a Man, that is afraid of nothing more than of giving them any distast, and is onely thoughtfull how he may be  
a good



a good Neighbour and a kind Friend to them. If they love not Religion, yet he knows they ought to love him, who makes Conscience of his doings; because they have no reason to apprehend an ill turn from such a Neighbour. And the less reason he gives them to be offended with him, the less apprehensive he is in himself of any kind of ill from them. He lives secure in himself; and is well persuaded, that the goodness of his own Actions will protect him from all the spite and ill-nature of a corrupt World.

And as he has no reason to believe but his Actions will be well approved and liked of among Men, so he has infinitely more reason to expect, that the God whose Will he makes his Rule, and whose Perfections he honours, should be favourable and good to him. There may be some reason to doubt, whether he shall at all times be so well treated in a World, where we see so much ignorance and folly, so much wickedness and ill-humour to prevail. But there is no reason to question, whether a God of infinite Purity will take pleasure in his own Perfections. Though Goodness has power enough to command respect from the worst of Men, yet a Misrepresentation, or a Calumny, or the Evil bent of Men's corrupt inclinations, which does not always suffer them to speak well of that Vertue, which they inwardly approve of, may disappoint the good Man's Expectations of Favour and Good-will among Men. But there is nothing to hinder him from rejoicing, in hopes of  
favour

favour and acceptance with God, whom he fears and reverences; because infinite Wisdom cannot be abused and imposed upon by false surmises, nor infinite Goodness and Holiness be spitefully inclined against a pure and holy Conversation.

This is so great a Truth, that bad Men oftentimes, by seeming to be what the Religious Man really is, do endeavour to secure to themselves a share in the good Man's Hope. Hence we read of the Hope of the Hypocrite, which though it be grounded onely upon a cheat and false show; yet it is an argument, that he is persuaded, that Religion is a sure ground of a comfortable expectation. For why should he be at the pains to disguise himself, if there was no more reason to hope well from good and vertuous Actions, than from those that are bad? And if Religion does beget such a Hope, as no Man is ashamed of; such a Hope, as even wicked Men, by a counterfeit Piety, are desirous to share in; who can doubt of its agreeableness to our Minds? For why should Men be better satisfied in themselves, and have a better Hope from a sober and temperate, a holy and upright Conversation, than from one, that is wicked and profligate, if the one has as just a Foundation in our Nature as the other?

2. If we consider the Fears of ill Men, they will assure us, that there is a great deal of Truth and Reality in Religion. I do not suppose that every Man, that does wickedly, does immediate-

ly fall under the displeasure of his Conscience: For a long course in Sin will do much to turn Men into such mere Brutes, as not to be capable of trembling at an Evil at a distance. But this is certainly true, that no Man can enter upon an Evil course, but his Conscience will reluct and terrifie him with the sense of his guilt, and frightfull apprehensions of future wrath.

A future state of Rewards and Punishments is indeed derided by the Enemies of Religion as an idle Tale of crafty Priests, that make use of it for the driving a Trade, and to awe the World into an unreasonable Respect. So that to go about to prove Religion by the fears of something hereafter, that possess Men, is, in their opinion, to prove one Cheat with another. We must therefore, they tell us, first prove there is such a State, before we go about to establish Religion by the Apprehensions Men have of it. Now if this be true, How comes it to pass that Men are more apprehensive from their bad, than their good Actions? Whence is it that Men look pale, and are fill'd with Horror and Anguish, when they do an ill thing, if there be not something within them, that tells them, they have put themselves into a great deal of Danger, and that they have done that, for which they must expect to be punished? If we take away Religion, what account shall be given of that Perplexity and Trouble, that Fear and Disquiet, that Dread and Terror, that are the consequences of Men's evil Actions? Religion, by acquainting us with  
another

another state, where the most secret Crimes shall be exposed and sentenced, does furnish us with a very good Reason for all this: But without Religion, no Reason can be given why Nature should startle within us, and fall into a kind of Convulsion, when we obey our Appetites, any more than when Reason does direct and rule us. Will any Man say, that all this arises from the severity of those Temporal Punishments wherewith Humane Laws do threaten Malefactors? This can be no sufficient Reason;

1. Because wicked Men are oftentimes scared at those Crimes, which no Humane Law takes notice of. They often tremble at the illness of their own Thoughts, and startle at the Wickedness they are meditating upon.

—*Patitur penas peccandi sola voluntas.*

*Nam scelus intra se tacitum qui cogitat ullum,  
Facti crimen habet.*—

Men are conscious to themselves of those first Inclinations of their Wills to do any Wickedness, which no Law can restrain; and yet though these expose not to the Wrath of the Magistrate, very bad Men do often want the courage to behold them: The Wickedness of their Wills does make them stagger; and while the Crime does lie within themselves, their own Consciences make them afraid. They suffer for the very Will to Sin; and the Wickedness of their Intentions are as terrible as the Fact. And this the  
same

same Poet does resolve into those natural Apprehensions we have of a Deity, and the severity of his Justice.

*Non quasi fortuito, nec ventorum rabio, sed  
Gratus cadat in terras, & vindicet ignis.*

And it is sure that such a dread and astonishment is not to be accounted for from the apprehension of any Corporal punishment, that the Laws of Men can inflict; because if there was nothing else that they need to fear, there is no reason, that they should fear or tremble at all, who have no Law to be afraid of. And besides,

1. There are a great many Crimes that Humane Laws lay but a very light Punishment upon Men for. And yet as little as the Penalty is, and as beloved as the Vice, there are few so hardy as to stand to their Crimes when they are called to an account for them: But trifling excuses are invented to palliate them; and many times the Anguish and Consternation is as great, as if they were in danger of the most dreadful Punishment, that the Law does inflict in any case. Add to this,

3. That there are some Crimes, that by the negligence of the Civil Magistrate, are seldom or never punish'd. And if it be onely the Power of the Magistrate that is dreaded in this case, Men ought not to be afraid at all. For when they, who have the Power to punish, do not make use of their Power, such a connivance does become  
a greater

a greater encouragement than their Power can be a terrour to Evil-doing. For at the utmost it can only be a doubtfull thing, whether Crimes of this nature shall be punish'd: And those who commit them have little cause of fear and perplexity, when it is, perhaps, a hundred to one, that they shall not be called to an account. For Men never are very apprehensive of a danger: where there is so much odds, that they shall escape it. And yet where there is so great a probability, that they may sin safely enough, it is not a very easie thing for a Man to commit any such wickedness. For though the Laws, that should restrain him, are laid asleep, yet his own Conscience is awake. And though the negligence of the Magistrate emboldens him to despise the Restraints of the Law, yet his guilt does so much cower his spirits, that the rebukes of those, that have no Authority over him, do beget recoillings in his Mind, and force him to pitifull shifts either to hide or extenuate his faults.

*Exemplo quodcumque malo committitur, ipse  
Displicet Auctoribus: prima est hæc ultio, quod se  
Judice, nemo nocens absolvitur.*

Every Sin that a Man commits is displeasing to himself: And the first punishment, that he suffers, is this, That though no-body else judges and condemns him, he cannot absolve himself. But,

4. It is a plain case, that the fears of wicked Men are owing to some other Cause than the Authority



thority of the Civil Magistrate; because they who have the greatest Power are subject to them. If indeed it was true, that their Fears did haunt chiefly the Cottages of the Poor, and that all the way we ascend towards the Thrones of Princes, we found them to lessen as Men are greater in Power, and quite to disappear as soon as we enter into the Palaces of Princes, there would be some reason to believe, that Humane Laws did first lay them in our Minds. But the Case is not so; for Princes and all in Authority do as well feel the Force of them, as their meanest Subjects. As little reason as they have to dread the Authority, that is in their own hands, yet there is a sense of guilt that Dogs, and lasses them when ever they do evil, as much as the Crimes of the poorest Beggar do him. And now what can such Fears be resolved into less than this, That Conscience is the same thing in every Man, and has as much Power over a Prince as his Vassal? What less can we conclude from hence, but that there is in every Man's Mind a secret Sense of the ill Desert of a wicked Life? For if Religion be nothing, and Conscience only a Bugbear, why should Men be more afraid, when they do ill than when they do well? Why should we be so differently affected with our good or evil Actions; especially when no Temporal Mischiefs need to be fear'd from any Humane Power? If there was nothing more in Religion, than what Custom or Humane Laws have made it, the Vertuous would have little Cause to rejoice

in their doings upon this account, because they many times are the least favour'd, and have the least benefit of Civil Laws: And, on the other hand, the wicked would have as little cause to fear, and to be pain'd in their Minds, because few Crimes, besides those that are injurious to Men, are much taken notice of; and there are ways, by which mighty Offences, that are the most strictly prohibited, go unpunish'd. But when after all this the Righteous rejoyce, and are full of Hope, and the wicked fear, and are as full of sad apprehensions, whence does this arise, but from something within us, that tells us there is a God and a future State; and that Right and Wrong, Truth and Falshood, Vertue and Vice, are things, that we shall find to be more than mere Names at the last.

## CH A P. VI.

### *The Conclusion.*

**I** Have in this Discourse endeavour'd to vindicate the Credit of Religion against those, that maliciously report it to have no other foundation, but either the Craft and Policy of States-men, and the Credulity of simple People, or at best the Authority of Governours, who are supposed by their People's receding from their natural Right to have a Power given them to declare, what is just and right, and what is Injustice and Iniquity. And if  
Religion

Religion has such a real Foundation in our Nature, as the foregoing Arguments do certainly prove it has,

1. Let us enquire how it comes to pass, that any Man can be an Enemy to it.

2. How great folly it is to neglect and despise it.

3. How much reason we have to live in the constant practice of it.

1. Upon what reason it is that any Man can be an Enemy to it. For it may as soon be expected, that a Man should be an Enemy to himself, and condemn the best Powers of his Nature, and believe, that he himself is the greatest Cheat in the World, as that he should believe, that That, which has so near a relation to, and perfect agreement with the Frame of his Nature, should be so. And indeed, if we consider the Grounds and Principles that they go upon, it is but too plain, that they do not remember, that they are Men, when they endeavour to overthrow the Truth and Reality of Religion: For either they consider themselves to be nothing more than material Beings, and to have nothing better than a Body to provide for; or if those Thoughts and Reasonings, those Reflections and other internal Operations which we are sensible of, and which cannot be accounted for from so dull and insensible a Principle as Matter is, do force 'em to acknowledge, that there is something in us, that is not Matter;

yet they maintain, that the Body is as considerable a part of us as the Soul; and that our bodily Appetites have naturally as good a Right to govern us, as our Reasons. So that although the spite of these Men does not go upon the same Principles, yet it is in both equally mischievous, and has a respect to the same ill Ends, which is the supporting the interests of the Flesh, and the serving our Lusts. The former indeed goes more roundly to work, and by a point-blank denial of his own Immortality leaves himself no other happiness, but what consists in bodily Enjoyments: And the latter, though he does allow of a Principle in us, that disposes us for Religion, yet does meet him in the same point, when he gives us good a Right in Nature to our bodily Appetites to govern us, as to our Reason. For it is not in favour to Reason, that he allows it a room in our Nature, since it would be all one to us if we had no Reason at all, if it may not command us. And what signifies a disposition to Religion, upon the account of the Reason that is in us, if we may, without incurring any guilt, despise both Reason and Religion upon the account of an equal Authority, that our bodily Appetites have to rule us? Does it not as much overthrow Religion to give such an Authority to our Appetites, as to deny all the Principles of it? And does not the setting our Appetites at liberty, from the Restraints of Religion, imply a very great tenderness to our Bodies? What less can be supposed to lie at the bottom

of such Discourses, as tell us, That though our Nature does dispose us to Religion, as we are reasonable Creatures, it does as much dispose us the other way, as we have fleshly Appetites planted in us; And that upon this account, he who obeys his Appetites, has as good a Right to do so, as he who obeys his Reason; so that in our natural State we cannot conceive any such thing as Sin, or a God to Judge and Punish us for it. What I say can lie at the bottom of such horrid Discourses, but a palpable design to serve the Interests of our Lusts. And indeed it is no great wonder, that Men, that have so much kindness to their Bodies, should endeavour to weaken the Power, and be spitefull against the Interests of Religion. Let them pretend a concern to free us from Prejudices and Prepossessions as much as they please, and a design to restore our Nature to its true and native Liberty, 'tis obvious enough, that all the Liberty they aim at, is to be Vicious, and to live as much without Reason, as if they did really believe they had none. For why should they contend for the Freedom of our Appetites from the Restraints of Reason, if they did not much more favour their Bodies than their Souls, and had not a greater liking to a Life of Sense than Reason? 'Tis a plain case, that they are Enemies to the Obligations of Religion for no other reason, but because they love their Lusts too well to have them check'd, and have stronger Inclinations to do wickedly, than to live well. And therefore it is objected against Religion,

that it is an utter Enemy to all the delights of the Body, and lays this part of us under such severities and hardships, as are no ways consistent with the Happiness of a Man. The meaning of which is, that they are Enemies to Religion, because it is an Enemy to an unreasonable way of living; and condemn its Restraints, because it condemns the Licentiousness of our Lusts. And if this be a just Reason to except against Religion, it is every-whit as just to quarrel with our own Nature, and to account it an unhappiness, that we are not Beasts. So that,

2. It is a very great folly to despise or neglect Religion. For we cannot do this, but to our own infinite hurt and mischief. It is to neglect the best means of satisfying all the desires of our Nature, and of putting our selves into that easie state, which every Man wishes and longs for. It is to hurl the greatest contempt upon our Understandings, and to persuade the World, that it is no advantage to us, that we are Men. It is to make Reason a useless Faculty to us, and the same thing as to wish we had been made Fools and Idiots. But more particularly,

1. It is to do the greatest mischief to the Soul.

2. To the Body. And he who can be such an Enemy to himself, does deserve the Character of a Fool.

3. It



1. It is to do the greatest mischief to the Soul. This indeed the Enemies of Religion are not very sensible of, but they are never the wiser Men for that; no more than a Man in a Lethargy, who feels nothing, can be said to enjoy the best health. The stupidity of the former is as ill a symptom of the dangerous condition of the Soul, as the insensibility of the latter is of the bad state of the Body. It is a considerable part of that mischief that Men do their Souls by the neglect of Religion, that they sin away that tenderness of their Consciences, whereby they should feel that hurt they do themselves. And therefore the Holy Scriptures do represent the case of those Men as desperate, and report them as persons given over and past cure, who are past feeling.

It is not then from what they averr, that we are to judge whether a sinfull contempt of Religion be mischievous or no, any more than we would conclude from the frantick Expressions of a Man in a Fever, that shall tell us he feels himself well, that he really is so; but from the ill symptoms of a great disorder in his Soul, that discover the illness of his state. Now it is too visible that every wicked Man, by neglecting Religion, does lay all wast within him. He injures his Mind by neglecting those improvements it is capable of, and is as cruel to his Soul as he would be judg'd to be to his Body, should he neglect those refreshments, that are needfull to keep it in repair. For Religion is the same to the Soul, as food is to the Body; and the former is subject

to the same Wastings and Languishings without  
 • Vertue, as the latter is without Meat and Drink.  
 And it is very obvious, that this is the case of  
 every wicked Man, when he lives, as if he had  
 nothing but a lump of Flesh to provide for. He  
 has consumed his Soul, as it were, to nothing, so  
 that he is no more sensible that there is any such  
 Principle in him. The great and noble Facul-  
 ties thereof have no life of their own left in him,  
 but all the spirit that moves and animates them  
 is derived from his Senses. So that all his Rea-  
 sonings respect onely the Welfare of his Body,  
 and the utmost use he makes of his Understand-  
 ing, is generally to know how he may eat and  
 drink well.

But this is not the onely Mischief that comes  
 to the Soul by the neglect of Religion; but when  
 a Man has once laid this aside, he parts with the  
 best Ornament of his Head, and the most grace-  
 full Dress that his Soul can be in. He then be-  
 gins to take his leave of the Nature and Spirit  
 of a Man, and to put on that of a Beast; to  
 lose his own upright Posture, and to stoop his  
 Soul to the groveling shape of a Brute. He parts  
 with the natural Order and Beauty of his Soul,  
 and turns himself into the most deformed Mon-  
 ster. For it is not so much against Nature to  
 see a Man's Body turned upside down, as to see  
 the Faculties of his Soul displaced: His Under-  
 standing and Reason, which are his head Facul-  
 ties, trampled under the Feet of his Lusts; and  
 a vile Appetite made to reign in the room of  
 Reason.

And

And yet this is not all, for by the neglect of Religion, Men treasure up Wrath and Vexation to themselves, and do such things as estrange them from, and make them ashamed to know themselves. And it must needs be so, because they are as unnatural to their own Minds, as he would be to his Body, who should refuse to breathe the Air he lives in. They neglect to cultivate their Souls, but suffer them to go so much out of Order, that like him that has been careless and negligent in his Business so long, that he has run out of all, they dare not take a view of their own Condition. And surely it is an Argument, that they are very sensible of the Mischief, they have done themselves, that to avoid the Vexation it would give them, they are forced to avoid their own Conversation, and are as much afraid of appearing in their own right, as a bankrupt Person is to meet his Creditor. And what greater Folly can a Man be guilty of, than by his own Carelessness to hurl himself into such a Condition, as leaves him neither Wit nor Will to remedy it. But because this is a matter the wicked Men seem not very sensible of, I come to consider,

How much mischief they do to their Bodies and their Temporal Concerns, those great Idols, that wicked Men have a particular Veneration for. And if I can make it appear, that they neglect the best means of promoting those Interests which they are chiefly concern'd (or, and for the sake of which they chuse to despise Reli-

gion,

gion, it will be a Demonstration of such Weakness and Folly, as ought to shame them for ever. For the Folly of a Man does never appear more shamefull, than when he shows himself unskilfull in the Management of those Affairs, that he pretends to be most knowing in. Now this is the Case of every wicked Man. He renounces Religion as an Enemy to our Bodies and secular Affairs, and pretends that the way of Life that he hath chosen, does the best of all others conduce to a happy and comfortable Life. Though they have no Concern at all for their Souls, yet they profess to have a great Tenderness for their Bodies; that they have no other End but to make their Lives easie and pleasant; and that the Ground of their quarrel with Religion is, because it abridges them in their Pleasures, and deprives us of the Comforts of this Life, by not suffering us to make those Provisions for the Flesh as are needfull thereto. So that in this Case they pretend to have weigh'd things with the greatest Exactness, and glory in it as a Mark of their Wisdom; that they have found out the true way of living happily. And it must be acknowledged, that if while Religion furnishes the Mind with Wisdom and Vertue, it did take no care of our Bodies, there would be some reason to reject it; because it could not be said to be sufficient for the Happiness of a Creature made up of Flesh, as well as Spirit. But if it be quite otherwise than as they report, the more Judgment they pretend to have made use of, the more gross is their Mistake,

stake, and the more palpable their Folly in chusing to live otherwise than Religion prescribes.

And that this is the very Truth of the matter will appear, if we consider,

1. What is requisite for the promoting our Temporal Aims.

2. What for the securing the Health and Vigour of our Bodies.

1. What is requisite for the promoting our Temporal Aims. And one of the first things, that every Man resolves on to this purpose, is to gain a good Interest, and to settle a good Correspondence among Men. For without this, we shall often-times find our selves perplexed with such Difficulties, as neither our own Wit nor Industry can over-come. So that that Course of Life which tends to disgust and alienate the Minds of those, whom we must in innumerable Cases depend upon, is so little for our Advantage, that it is not our Wisdom to make choice of it. And this is the unhappy Condition of those that throw off all respect to Religion. For they thereby reject those Succours of Providence, that are of absolute Necessity for the succeeding our Endeavours. They slight that Wisdom that is best able to direct their Paths; and that Goodness, which is the best Refuge we have in any Extremity. Neither is this all; for he, who looks upon himself to be under no obligations to Religion, must likewise believe, that no Man is under any obligation

gation to love and respect him, to repose any Confidence in, or to hold any Correspondence or Conversation with him. For 'tis only Religion by obliging us to be true and faithfull, just and honest, kind and charitable, does lay that Foundation of Respect and Truth, which is necessary to Conversation. And there is no Man can break with these Vertues, but he must bring upon himself the Scorn and Contempt of all Mankind. And,

2. For the securing that Health and Vigour, without which it cannot be said to be well with our Bodies, It is necessary,

1. That we content our selves with such a use of those things as our Appetites crave, as is not burthenosome and uneasy to Nature.

2. Such a use as supposes them not to be fully satisfactory to us.

3. That we content our selves with such a use of bodily Enjoyments, as is not burthenosome and uneasy to Nature. For when ever we exceed in the use of those refreshments, that our Bodies need, instead of supporting Nature, we weaken and destroy it. So that he who blames Religion upon the Account of those restraints it lays upon us, tells the World that he does not know what is good for him. He cries out upon Religion as an Enemy to our Bodies, and would persuade us, that it suffers us not to take the best care of our selves



elves we can, to make our Lives chearfull and pleasant: And yet if you ask him what kind of pleasure it forbids us the Enjoyment of, or in what respect it requires us to be negligent of our Bodies, he can make no Answer to this, but by instancing in such a use of those things that are gratefull to our Bodies, as is really hurtfull and mischievous to it. The Summ of all his Complaints is this, That it suffers him not to eat and drink to excess, or to let his Appetites grow so extravagant, that nothing can satisfie them: That it suffers him not to over-charge Nature, and thereby to load his Body with Loathings and Diseases. And what is this but the Complaint of a Fool, who neither knows how to chuse well for himself, nor is capable of being instructed.

2. With such a use as does not suppose the things we now need to be in their own Nature satisfactory. I do not suppose, that we are mistaken, when we account the Creatures, that God has made for our Support and Comfort, to be good for us, and those Earthly Delights, that our Senses affect, to be designed as Entertainments to us, while we are in the Flesh, nor does Religion blench them, as if they were not: But we certainly mistake in the use of them, when we pursue them with that Eagerness, as if we could never have enough of them. For by such an Enlargement of our Desires, we really discredit them, and do as good as tell the World, that in the Enjoyment we find nothing of that good

in them, that we expected: And besides, by such an excessive Appetite after, and pursuit of them, we do that Injury to our Senses, as renders them less capable of tasting the Sweet that is in them. For consider the Man whose mind is wholly bent upon heaping up Riches, or who gives himself up to a voluptuous sensual way of living, and you will find, that he enjoys less of that good, that is in Earthly Possessions and bodily Pleasures, than he who takes care to moderate his Appetites. For whereas, he who takes this way to satisfy his Desires, does really taste all the good that is in Enjoyments of this Nature, and does always maintain that Liveliness and Vigour in his sensitive Appetites, which is requisite to the true Pleasure of the Body. He who is always troubled with worldly Solitudes, and lets his Desires out-go his Enjoyments, is not any time at leisure to taste the Fruits of his Labour. He does not believe the satisfaction he looks for is to be found in any thing he has, but in something that he wants. And therefore in the midst of all that he enjoys, he is full of wants and dissatisfactions, and what-ever he acquires gives him no ease. And thus it will be with him, should he lay House to House, and Field to Field, till he had got the whole World into his Hands.

And thus it is as to worldly Delights: The sensual Man, who believes that the only Happiness of Humane Life, does consist in bodily Delights, does taste the least of that Pleasure, that  
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he magnifies so much. For by going beyond that Measure of Enjoyment, which is gratefull to Nature, he wasts his Spirits, tires Nature, dulls his Senses, and renders them unfit for any quick Perception. There is no bodily Pleasure, but by being too long enjoy'd does grow nauseous, and makes the Appetite it should gratifie, sick and uneasy. So that it is plain, that if we would enjoy the satisfaction, that is in bodily Delights, if we would reap the Benefit of our Possessions, and feel the Pleasure, that is in sensual Gratifications; we must moderate our Appetites as Religion requires, and stop there where Nature does. And now the Folly of those, that despise Religion, and except against those restraints, it lays upon us, does appear in this; That they are so little acquainted with the Natures of things, as to expect more from them, than they can possibly find in them. They have not Judgment enough to discern that they disappoint themselves of that Pleasure, they love and are so fond of by suffering their Appetites to crave beyond measure: nor to apprehend, that instead of refreshing and maintaiping the Health of their Bodies, their immoderate Use of sensitive Enjoyments does consume and destroy it. And this Folly they are so fond of, that they will not hear of a Remedy, but quarrel with Religion for endeavouring to put them in a way to compass the End they aim at. 'Tis the Health of the Body, and the prolonging our Lives, the Pleasure and Satisfaction of our Senses, that Religion aims at, when it forbids

bids those Excesses of Sensuality and Voluptuousness, which impair Nature, and destroy the Vigour of Men's Constitutions, and certainly kill more than any Judgment God does punish Mankind with; and prescribes those Rules of Temperance and Moderation, both in the Use of our Appetites, and all the other Refreshments, that belong to our Bodies, by which the weakest Constitutions are often enabled to outlast the strongest; and yet these Men, that love their Bodies so tenderly are such Fools, as to blame Religion for all this. They would have Health and a long Life, and be at free from Pain and Ughness, as it is possible for Man to be in such a Life as this is, and yet they have not the Wit to discern that they take a Course, that thwarts their Devices, when they neglect Religion; and that they are extremely beholding to Religion for giving them those Rules, without which they can never long enjoy, what they would have. If it be an Argument of Folly not to know how to adapt means suitable to the Ends we aim at, the wicked irreligious Man must pass for the wisest Fool that is, for living as he does, when it is the Welfare of his Body, that he pretends to mind at. If he be wise in the Choice of his End, he can never avoid the Imputation of Folly for living otherwise, than according to the Rules of Temperance and Moderation, that Religion gives. Neither is it in the Opinion of all that know him only, that he is guilty of so much Weakness and Folly, but his own Thoughts

do upbraid him with it, when a surfeited Body does force him to submit to those very Rules as reasonable and just, which at other times he condemns as rigid and severe. As much as he cries out upon Religion for imposing them, he has nothing to except against them, when they are prescribed by his Physician. And how preposterously does this Man act in despising those Restraints, when put upon him for preserving his Body healthfull and vigorous, which he flies to as the only means to restore it, when it is decayed. He out of a tender regard to his Body, does check his Appetites, when it is for the Recovery of his lost Health, and believes he cannot take a better Course for the freeing himself from the Languishings of a Surfeit and a Debauch, and yet he pretends it is out of love to his Body, that he lets his Appetites loose, when he is in health. So that this Man has no other way to prove himself no Fool, but by satisfying the World how that way of Life can be unreasonable, which he believes is good for his Body, or that good for his Body which he himself is forced to condemn as hurtfull to him. And now, How much Reason have we to think well of, and to live in a constant Practice of Religion? For this is to live according to the proper instincts of, and to take an Account of our Duty from our Nature. 'Tis the Business we are in a peculiar manner framed for, and in our regard to which we give Honour to our Reason, and consult

sult our greatest good. We ought from the Dignity of our Nature, saith *Hierocles*, to take an Account of our Duty, and to weigh how we ought to act and speak. And again: It is from the Ignorance of our Nature, that all kind of Evil breaks in upon us: So that if we know our selves, and reject those things, that are a Reproach to our Reason, we judge rightly of our Duty: *Σὺ γὰρ φύσιν εἶ, καὶ νόον*, saith *Epictetus*. Thou art a Principal part of God's Handiwork, thou art something taken from God Himself, thou hast some Part of God in thee. Why therefore art thou not mindfull of thy Nobility? Why dost thou not consider from whence thou comest? When thou eatest or speakest, wilt thou not remember, who thou art, that eatest, and whom thou feedest, that thou nourishest a God, and carriest a God about with thee. If thou wast a Statue carv'd by the Hand of *Phidias*, when thou considerest whose Work thou wast (if thou couldest know it) thou wouldest endeavour to do nothing unworthy, either of so famed an Artist, or of thy self; nor wouldest thou be seen in an undecent Garb by those, that should behold thee. And since thou art the Workmanship of God, wilt thou take no care of thy self? God has committed thee to thy own Care, neither did he know of any, that would be more faithfull to such a Trust. Be sure, saith he, to preserve this Depositum, such as it is, in its own Nature. 'Tis then by having a Recourse



to our own Nature, that we must learn the way of Life, that we are framed for: And since Religion has such a near Relation to us, that without it our best Faculties are of little or no Use to us; and in spight of our natural Depravity, we cannot but desire, that all the Principles thereof were true, and its Duties put in practice, who can doubt but that this ought to be the Business of our Lives? It is that Business by which we must gratifie our Reasons, and improve our Minds, and delight our Consciences: And if this ought not to be our Business, why have we such Faculties as require it? It is as necessary, that we live in the Practice of Religion, as that we live like Men, and discover a Difference between a Man and a Beast. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of thee.* i. e. Since God has display'd more of his Goodness to thee, than to the Creatures of Sense, what is it that he expects from thee, *but to do Justice, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God,* Micah 6. 8. And hence it is, that *Lactantius* makes the Difference between a Man and a Beast to consist in this, that we are capable of Religion, and they are not. For, saith he, take away Religion and Righteousness, and Man degenerates to the Folly of a Brute, or which is worse, having lost his Reason, to their Immanity and Fierceness. And he tells us, that the Heathens, although they mistook in the Object of their Worship, yet did acknowledge the

*De Ira Dei*  
c. 12.

*Isai. 1. 2.*  
c. 3.

chief Duty of Man to lie in Religion, by maintaining an Appearance of it in their false Worship; because the Chief, if not the only Difference between Man and a Brute does lie in Religion.

This then is the only calling in the World, that every Man is bound to follow, and which will find a full Employment for all our Heads, and Hearts, and Hands, every Man, of what Quality or Condition soever he is, is indispensibly bound to fear God and keep his Commandments. Neither need any Man fear, that he shall debase himself thereby: For as Reason is the Noblest faculty of his Nature, there is nothing so fit for his Reason to converse with, as Religion. Now this can be said of no other Calling beside: For although the Benefit of every Man's secular Employment, does reach to the whole Society; yet if every Man was of one Calling, no body would be the better for it, and the best is only serviceable to our Bodies. But Religion is an Employment of that Nature, as will find Work for the Souls and Bodies of every Man, and which the more it is practised by every Man, the better it is for all the World. Nay, further, it is a Calling, that every Man must manage in his own Person, or else neither he will receive any benefit by it, nor the World by him. 'Tis possible, that any of those secular Callings, that are for the Relief of our present Necessities, may be managed by other Heads and Hands than our own; and although a Man be wholly

wholly careless himself, yet his Affairs may thrive in the Hands of a trusty and faithfull Servant. But as to Religion, it is of that Concernment to us, that it is impossible any Man should improve in it, or be the better for it, who does not take it into his own Hands, and give all Diligence to make his Calling and Election sure. There is no qualifying our selves for Heaven by a Proxy, no adorning our Souls by the Vertues and Graces of a Friend or a Servant, no satisfying God for the Neglect of our Duty by the Merits of a Saint; but either we must labour for our selves, and be industrious to add to our Faith all the Vertues of Religion, or the Nakedness and Poverty of our Souls will be our everlasting Shame.

And what is it, that we will be industrious in, if not in that Employment, which God has made us for, and which we must live and prosper Eternally by? Is there any thing, that it can with more Reason be expected, that we should be diligent in, than our own Business? Or is there any Affair more pressing and urgent upon us, any that it half so much concerns us to attend to, as that upon which the Honour of our Nature, and the well being both of our Souls and Bodies, both in this Life, and that which is to come depends? To say of any thing that it is our Business does imply, that we are fitted and designed for it, that we thoroughly understand the Mysteries of it, and that we husband our time, as well as we can, in prosecuting the great Ends of

it. This we know, is the meaning of our having any thing for our Employment: And if it be Religion alone, that our Reason has a respect to, this ought to be as much our Employment, as any of those Callings, whereby we maintain our Mortal lives.

And were we but as sensible of the Necessity and great Concernment of our Spiritual, as we are of our Temporal Affairs; what Noble Improvements might we make, what Treasures might we lay up in Heaven, and what excellent Persons should we make our selves: How little Prophaneness and Debauchery, how few Tricks and crafty Devices. How little Strife and Contentious Animosities would trouble the World? Nay, how much would the fear of God then influence us, and the consideration of his Presence and Majesty awe and make us afraid of offending him? How should we court his Favour, by frequenting the place where his Honour dwells, and by paying a due veneration and regard to every thing, that has a relation to him; by honouring his Sabbaths, revering his Word, and in Supplication and Prayer by expressing our dependance upon him? With how much Love and Goodnature, Simplicity and Integrity, Justice and Honesty, Faith and Truth would Men converse with each other, and how much of Heaven should we have here below? We daily see, how industrious Men, that design to live, and make themselves usefull Members in a Society are in managing their affairs; when any business is before us, with what

what care and thoughtfulness do we contrive and project the compassing it to our advantage? And when we have the prospect of some gain before us, how little do we grudge the pains and labour, the difficulties and hardships it puts us to? We then sit up late, and rise early, and neither dread ill ways nor hard weather, but with a great deal of cheerfulness undertake tiresome Journeys and dangerous Voyages for the sake of the advantage we have in our Eye. All this we do and suffer for the sake of our Bodies: And did we love our Souls as well, we should be as hearty in the practice of all the Duties of Religion.

And for the better promoting so good a work, let us consider these Two things:

1. That Religion is the easiest Employment we have. It will, 'tis true, take up all our Time, and employ all our Faculties, but it will never be a burden to us. Men, that favour their Lusts, may complain of difficulties; and 'tis certain, that Religion is severe enough upon the Lusts of our Flesh, which it commands us to crucifie and destroy. But all this implies no more than this, That it is a difficult, yes, an impossible thing for Men, that serve their Lusts, to serve the living God. But after all, let but any Man consider the Nature of all the Duties of Religion, and he will find such a gratefulness of them to the Reason of his own Mind, so much comfort and satisfaction to his Conscience to issue from them, as will force him to declare that it is the best and easiest, the most delightfull and ingenuous Employment, that  
a Man

a Man can possibly take to ; For it commands us to do nothing, but what our own Reason does ; and to avoid nothing, but what our own Consciences abhorre. And is it a hard thing for a Man to live according to the Laws of his own Mind, and to follow the Dictates of his own Conscience, and in all he does to consider, that he is a Man, and that his own Reason ought to govern him ? Is it a grievous thing for a Man not to wound his Conscience, not to fill his Soul with vexation and horror ? Is it, I say, an uneasy Employment to take care, that there be nothing in our Conversation, but what is gracefull and comely, what will render us beloved of God and Man, and what will fill us with joy unspeakable ? Surely if any thing be easie for us to do, it is that, which we are peculiarly made for, and which the joy and comfort, the ease and satisfaction, the pleasure and happiness of our whole Nature depends on.

2. That it will be infinitely satisfactory to us at the last to consider, that we have been employ'd in the business of our lives. The time will come, when we shall know that Religion is our business : That time, I mean, when we shall so far return to our selves, as to be sensible, that we are something more than Brutes, and that our Happiness does not lie in the gratifying the Appetites of a mortal Body : And then when those, that have been negligent and careless of every thing but a Body, that is going to its Grave, will be seiz'd with sad remorse, and fill'd

with



with confusion, the Religious Man will look over a well-spent Life with great content and delight. Surely St. Paul felt a wonderfull satisfaction in his Mind, when he could say, *I am ready to be offer'd, and the time of my departure is at hand: I have fought the good fight, I have finish'd my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give me at the last day,* 2 Tim. 4. 6, 7, 8. This is the comfortable issue of a Religious Life: It gives a Man peace at the last; and having all his time been well employ'd in the Duties of his Calling, he has no sorrowfull Reflections to make, but nothing else to do but to die, and to receive his reward. But with wicked Men it is quite otherwise: For they have all their business lying upon their hands, when they are called upon to bring in their accounts. And how uncomfortable a thing will it be then to them, to consider how much work they have made themselves, by fixing ill Habits in their Minds, and turning their whole Nature out of course by accustoming themselves to do Evil? How dolefull a thing to look upon the disorders of their Souls, the wast of their Time, their abuse of Grace, and; above all, their contempt of those fair warnings, that have been given them? Then will their Hell begin, when they see their Souls so eaten out of heart with Sin, that they neither have Skill nor Time to remedy it. Let us then be so wise as to prevent all this mischief, by making use of Time and

and Opportunity, and working while it is day, that when the night comes, wherein no Man can work, we may not be found barren and unfruitful. I shall conclude this Discourse with St. Peter's Exhortation, 2 Epist. 1. 12, 13. *Wherefore the rather, or above all things, Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

# FINIS.

## ERRATA.

Page 6. Line 6. for *latter*, Read *former*. P. 10. Marg. P. 11. l. 17. for *latter*, r. *latter*. P. 17. l. 10. for *latter*, r. *latter*.

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